

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT I

GINGER ROGERS

This report answers questions raised in your letter of February 23, 1940.

1. *Does the public like Ginger Rogers in the vehicles she last appeared in, such as "BACHELOR MOTHER" and "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL"?*
2. *What would be the receptivity for a film in which Ginger Rogers would be again starred with Fred Astaire?*

The answer to the first question, as revealed by a nation-wide study of ticket-buyers, is that the public very definitely liked Ginger Rogers in one of her recent vehicles, "BACHELOR MOTHER", but did not particularly like her in "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL".

"FIFTH AVENUE GIRL" was not only less well-liked than "BACHELOR MOTHER" but was also inferior in this respect to a number of other and much earlier vehicles, as shown in the table below.

Audience Research Institute submitted a representative list of Ginger Rogers pictures to a cross-section of movie-goers and asked them which they had seen, and of those they had seen, which they enjoyed most. Results ranked the pictures in this order:

1. "BACHELOR MOTHER"
2. "IRENE AND VERNON CASTLE"
3. "ROBERTA"
4. "TOP HAT"
5. "FOLLOW THE FLEET"
6. "VIVACIOUS LADY"
7. "GAY DIVORCEE"
8. "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL"
9. "CAREFREE"

From the wide difference in the standing of "BACHELOR MOTHER" and "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL", it is at once apparent that it is dangerous to generalize about reactions to films of this type.

We have conducted a great many experiments in connection with this sort of picture material, and have found that the light sophisticated comedy is the most difficult of all to reduce to a successful formula. The explanation is simple: the success of such a picture is so largely dependent on dialogue, direction, acting, and other production factors, that it is inevitably a more speculative proposition than other more clear-cut stories.

Report I, continued.

Also noteworthy in the table given above is the fact that one of the more recent Rogers-Astaire pictures, "CAREFREE", ranked last in respect to the proportion of persons who now remember it as the Ginger Rogers picture they most enjoyed. It was stopped not only by the last Rogers-Astaire picture, but also by many earlier ones, including some several years old. This situation suggests an unsatisfactory audience reaction to the particular vehicle, rather than to pictures featuring the dancing team.

This brings us to the answer to the second question. The evidence demonstrates that, assuming the two vehicles would be equally good for their kind, the movie-going public would prefer seeing Ginger Rogers in another dancing picture with Fred Astaire to seeing her in another comedy without Fred Astaire.

We tested Ginger Rogers first in "KITTY FOYLE" (as representing another comedy without Fred Astaire) against a standard control list of pictures, and then tested her with Fred Astaire in a dancing picture against identical controls. The Astaire picture received substantially more votes than "KITTY FOYLE".

Supporting evidence of the public preference for a picture with Astaire is found in the answers to a direct question. In a survey conducted among ticket-buyers in forty-eight states we asked this question: "If two Ginger Rogers pictures were showing tonight, which would you go to see, a light comedy on the order of "BACHELOR MOTHER" and "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL", or a musical and dancing picture with Fred Astaire on the order of "TOP HAT" and "CAREFREE"?"

The Astaire picture won by a substantial margin. The same question was repeated in a slightly modified form in a second survey, and again the Astaire picture won comfortably.

Finally we asked this question: "If two movies, both with music and dancing, were showing tonight, which would you go to see—one with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, or one with Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland?"

While the Rooney-Garland combination won, the margin of superiority was by no means overwhelming. In view of the current popularity of these two "babes in arms" and the great success of their recent vehicles, the fact that the margin of difference was no greater indicates considerable audience acceptance for another Rogers-Astaire picture at this time.

March 21, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT II

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND CHARLES LAUGHTON

This report answers questions raised in your letter of February 23, 1940.

1. *What would be the public attitude toward a film on Benjamin Franklin, regardless of the actor who plays the role?*
 2. *What would be the attitude whether Laughton plays it, or Edward Arnold, or Edward G. Robinson?*
 3. *Would the public prefer Laughton in "BENJAMIN FRANKLIN" or "PHANTOM OF THE OPERA" or "DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE" or "HALF A ROGUE"?*
1. Evidence gathered by the Audience Research Institute in a nation-wide study of reactions to a film about Benjamin Franklin demonstrates a high audience acceptance value for this picture at the present time, regardless of the actor who plays the leading part.

"BENJAMIN FRANKLIN" was tested against two standard hypothetical pictures, "ARMY SURGEON" and "GENERAL LEE", omitting players throughout the tests. "FRANKLIN" ranked higher than "ARMY SURGEON"—a promising performance for any picture, in view of the consistently high audience acceptance value which previous studies have revealed for "ARMY SURGEON".

Against "GENERAL LEE", "FRANKLIN" again ranked first, this time by a somewhat larger margin. This is especially significant, not only because "GENERAL LEE" has proved consistently popular, but also because "GENERAL LEE" shares many of the same basic appeals as "FRANKLIN".

2. The answer to the second question is that Charles Laughton has emerged as the most popular choice for the part of Franklin. We conducted a battery of three tests on the casting problem, approaching it from three different angles. In all three tests Laughton was victorious. Arnold stood second in two tests, and one test Robinson stood second.

Comments indicated that Robinson's low standing is due to the fact that people have difficulty in reconciling his appearance with their impression of Franklin, but it must be remembered that our interviewing was completed before "DR. EHRLICH" was generally released.

Report II, continued.

3. The answer to the third question is that "BENJAMIN FRANKLIN" has a greater audience acceptance value *as a vehicle for Laughton* than the other three pictures. The order of preference is:

1. "BENJAMIN FRANKLIN"
2. "THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA"
3. "DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE"
4. "HALF A ROGUE"

The low standing of "HALF A ROGUE" is due to relatively less inherent interest in the story itself rather than to unsuitability of the part for Laughton. As a matter of fact comments showed that many persons consider this an ideal vehicle for Laughton's acting ability. We propose to do further work on this particular facet of the problem.

The substance of all these findings is: *That "BENJAMIN FRANKLIN" is a promising story idea, with a greater audience acceptance value than the other three, and that Charles Laughton is a popular choice for the leading role.*

We propose to make some further tests on the Franklin story, with two specific purposes. In the first place we should like to analyze the appeal of the idea to different groups of movie-goers. In the second place, our study has suggested that there are chapters in Franklin's life which possess greater audience interest value than other chapters. But we would prefer to explore this field further before reporting our discoveries.

March 21, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT III

PORT HURON

At our meeting in Hollywood on February 14, Mr. Schaefer asked for an investigation into the effectiveness of special location openings, such as the Port Huron premiere for "Young Tom Edison".

A nation-wide survey of movie-goers, conducted by the Audience Research Institute three weeks after the Port Huron premiere, has revealed the following facts:

1. The Publicity Penetration of "Young Tom Edison" has risen in Michigan to the remarkable figure of 70%.
2. The number of people in Michigan who have *specific knowledge* about the premier in Port Huron has reached the equally noteworthy figure of 42%. The premiere was thus markedly successful in publicizing the picture in the Michigan area.
3. The Publicity Penetration of "Young Tom Edison" in the rest of the country, outside Michigan, rose from 21% on January 26 to 54% on February 29. The Port Huron premiere took place in the period in which this very big increase in Publicity Penetration occurred, but it is impossible to attribute any definite proportion of the increase to the premiere.

From this evidence it appears that the value of a location premiere must depend on:

1. The importance of the area surrounding the location as a source of revenue.
2. The suitability of that location for purposes of *national* exploitation.
3. The cost of the premiere in relation to the cost of other kinds of advertising.

Undoubtedly, the value of location premieres must vary widely with the picture. Next week we shall study the effectiveness of the "Virginia City" premiere of March 17.

March 21, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT IV

CHARLES LAUGHTON

This report answers the question raised in your letter of March 25, 1940:

In your letter of March 21st you say that you find "Charles Laughton is an actor who inspires somewhat violent reactions" and that "Five per cent of the movie-goers volunteered that they dislike Laughton".

Is this a high percentage relatively to other actors of the same eminence as Laughton? For example, have you similar statistics for Edward G. Robinson, Clark Gable, and Cary Grant, et al?

We have no precisely similar statistics concerning other actors, for the reason that we do not question people directly to find out which actors they dislike. The information concerning Charles Laughton was produced by *voluntary* comments, offered by movie-goers in explaining their answers to detailed questions of casting.

It is true, however, that we have not thus far asked questions about any other actor which have produced an equal volume of unfavorable comments. This situation implies that the "dislike" vote for Laughton is unusually high.

Laughton's "dislike" vote should not be taken too seriously, since the proportion of persons expressing themselves unfavorably is after all not very large, and the actual significance of the "dislike" vote is somewhat obscure. We reported its presence merely as an interesting sidelight.

As a matter of fact, experiments carried out in 1937 demonstrated that there is no relationship between the results produced by questioning movie-goers concerning personalities whom they like, and those whom they dislike. That is, the players who receive the most "dislike" votes are not those who receive the fewest votes as "liked".

These experiments with direct questions on stars disliked produced no positive conclusion, and this line of inquiry was therefore abandoned. We did, however, glean a few facts which may be interesting to you.

We found that active dislike was largely confined to comedians and to a handful of unusually distinctive personalities, this rule holding good for both male and female actors.

Thus the actors who attracted the most "dislike" votes were found to be the Marx Brothers, Mae West, Laurel and Hardy, Joe E. Brown, Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich.

The more conventional types such as Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Robert Taylor and Irene Dunne were found to be relatively immune to dislike.

It would appear that Charles Laughton's "dislike" vote is due to two factors: the unsympathetic roles in which he has specialized and the unconventional quality of his personality.

Although it will be another month before our first analysis of player followings is completed, there is already unmistakable evidence that Charles Laughton is one of those stars who are more popular with men than with women.

During the week ending March 23, we submitted a representative list of Laughton's pictures to a national cross-section of movie-goers and asked them which they had seen, which they enjoyed most. Results ranked the pictures in this order of enjoyment:

1. "MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY"
2. "THE BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET"
3. "RUGGLES OF RED GAP"
4. "HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME"
5. "REMBRANDT"
6. "HENRY VIII"
7. "JAMAICA INN"
8. "THE BEACHCOMBER"

While we do not feel justified in drawing conclusions from the above ranking of Laughton's pictures, we believe that it may be of service to you in planning his future assignments.

April 3, 1940

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AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT V

THE AMERICAN WAY

This report answers the question raised in your letter of March 19, 1940:

What would be the audience acceptance value of THE AMERICAN WAY starring Fredric March and Florence Eldridge?

Audience Research Institute has now completed a series of tests on the reaction of movie-goers to THE AMERICAN WAY, and the results of these tests confirm the preliminary conclusion reported in our telegram of April 1: While the audience acceptance value of THE AMERICAN WAY is moderate, it is not remarkable, and for that reason it would seem to us questionable whether it justifies production on the budget reported in the trade press.

Specifically, our evidence was obtained by the three following procedures.

- 1) A synopsis of THE AMERICAN WAY with the names of the stars Fredric March and Florence Eldridge was tested against a standard list of hypothetical control pictures. THE AMERICAN WAY emerged as a picture with slightly better than average audience appeal, ranking higher than FIFTH AVENUE GIRL, LADY OF THE TROPICS and VIGIL IN THE NIGHT, but very considerably lower than such high-bracket films as NORTHWEST PASSAGE, BABES IN ARMS, and MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON. These three latter pictures had all been similarly pre-tested against standard controls, and had all scored substantially more votes than THE AMERICAN WAY.
- 2) The second test was similar in all respects to the first, except that the stars' names were omitted. In this case THE AMERICAN WAY received a lower vote than before, thereby confirming our earlier impression, that the picture's acceptance value depends more upon the popularity of Fredric March than upon interest in the story.

It is significant that in both these tests THE AMERICAN WAY was found to be markedly weaker with movie-goers under eighteen years of age than with older groups.

- 3) In the third test we used a more detailed synopsis and identified the stars. A separate but comparable group of movie-goers were asked whether they believed they would enjoy seeing THE AMERICAN WAY more or less than the last picture they had seen. It is assumed that the last picture seen by a cross-section of the national audience represents the *average* picture.

43% said they would enjoy THE AMERICAN WAY *more* than the last movie they had seen.

41% said they would enjoy THE AMERICAN WAY *less* than the last movie they had seen.

16% said they would enjoy THE AMERICAN WAY *about the same* as the last movie they had seen.

Thus, slightly fewer than half believed they would enjoy *THE AMERICAN WAY* *more* than the last picture they had seen.

The results of these three separate tests indicate that *THE AMERICAN WAY* has an audience acceptance value which cannot be described as better than that of run-of-mill A product.

In order to find out which sequences in *THE AMERICAN WAY* possess the greatest audience appeal, a national cross-section of movie-goers were asked to read the following synopsis:

"The parade of events in America in the last fifty years, described through the story of a poor German immigrant couple, their children and grandchildren. From youth to old age, their lives in an Ohio town reflect the problems of the nation.

The Industrial Boom of 1900 shows them winning prosperity as manufacturers, after years of struggle.

"During the War, they are torn between affection for their old country and loyalty to their new, but they are proud of their American soldier son, who is later killed in France.

"The Depression takes their fortune, when they attempt to come to the aid of a banker friend.

"And finally, the Nazi movement in America is seen by the old man as the new threat to democracy. He gives his life to prevent his grandson from joining the Bund."

The question was then asked: What things in the movie as described do you think you would enjoy most? It is interesting to note that the two most topical chapters—the Bund and the War—emerged as the most interesting to movie-goers.

- 24% selected the Bund
- 21% selected the War
- 12% selected the Industrial Boom
- 9% selected the family life
- 9% selected the Parade of Events in general
- 8% selected the conflicts of loyalties
- 6% selected the Depression
- 2% selected the arrival of the family in the United States
- 9% of the replies did not submit of classification.

It is to be hoped that, if *THE AMERICAN WAY* goes before the cameras, these different sequences will be given proportionate weight, in order to secure the maximum audience appeal for the picture.

Our investigation uncovered evidence which proves that, to most people, the title does not convey an accurate indication of the nature of the picture. At the beginning of one questionnaire, movie-goers were asked the following question: *A movie is now being made in Hollywood called THE AMERICAN WAY. What does this title suggest to you?*

A detailed analysis of the replies reveals that only 15% of movie-goers can guess from the title (or know already) what kind of picture this would be. These include those who saw the play (2 per cent) and those with any other previous knowledge of the play (4 per cent).

Another 14% can be classified as being able to make a vague but not entirely inaccurate guess at the significance of the title. Their replies include:

- "Government and its people"*
- "Something to do with freedom of speech or press"*
- "American home life—political organization"*
- "American way of living compared to foreign countries"*
- "Propaganda for American system of Government"*

The remaining 71 per cent of persons interviewed gave answers which must be classified as incorrect, or so vague as to be without any significance. Included in this majority group were such replies as the following:

- "The terribly fast rate Americans live"*
- "An ordinary family like the Hardy pictures"**
- "I suppose rising to the top in the world"*
- "Two cars in every garage"*
- "Sounds like a dance-musical picture"*
- "Sounds like a musical comedy"*
- "The Army and Navy, I suppose"*
- "A sort of Navy picture"*

It would seem fair to conclude that the title of THE AMERICAN WAY fails to indicate what kind of picture it is.

April 8, 1940

* It is worthy of note that a considerable proportion of movie-goers thought THE AMERICAN WAY would be a "family" picture.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT VI

Virginia City Premiere, March 16, 1940

In Report III we set forth the results of our investigation into the effectiveness of the Port Huron premiere of YOUNG TOM EDISON. We now report the results of a similar investigation into the effectiveness of the VIRGINIA CITY premiere.

A nation-wide survey of movie-goers conducted by Audience Research Institute two weeks before the premiere revealed that 16% of movie-goers had then heard or read of VIRGINIA CITY. A second survey conducted during the four days immediately following the premiere showed that the figure had risen to 25%. Two weeks later the figure had reached 61%.

As in our earlier study on Port Huron, it is impossible to determine accurately how much of the rise can be ascribed to the Nevada premiere. It would not be fair to credit the entire increase to the premiere, because VIRGINIA CITY had opened in several other cities, including New York and Chicago, before our final measurement of publicity penetration was obtained. The figure of 61%, therefore, reflects in some measure the effect of local advertising effort.

We will, therefore, have to look further for additional evidence of the specific publicity effect of the premiere. In a separate study conducted during the last few days of March, movie-goers were asked this question:

"Recently several movies have had their first showing in a place that had something to do with the story. For instance, GONE WITH THE WIND had its first showing in Atlanta, Georgia. Can you remember if any of these movies (PRIMROSE PATH, YOUNG THOMAS EDISON, VIRGINIA CITY, DR. EHRLICH'S MAGIC BULLET) had such a premiere?"

PRIMROSE PATH and DR. EHRLICH were included to provide a measure of the guessing in answer to this question; it proved to be insignificant. Results were as follows:

	Knew of premiere but could not identify locale	Identified locale	Total knowing of premiere	No Knowledge of premiere
VIRGINIA CITY	10%	22%	32%	68%
YOUNG TOM EDISON	16%	5%	21%	79%
PRIMROSE PATH	1%	—	1%	99%
DR. EHRLICH	1%	—	1%	99%

The most significant fact in the above table is that one movie-goer in every three (32%) was aware that VIRGINIA CITY had a special premiere. This fact is especially interesting in relation to the proportion of persons who had heard of the movie at that time. That figure, as reported above, was 61%. In other words, half the people who had heard or read anything about VIRGINIA CITY knew specifically that it had opened on location.

It seems justified to conclude from these facts that the VIRGINIA CITY premiere succeeded in effectively publicizing the picture.

This evidence, however, does not warrant a general conclusion applicable to all openings on location. As pointed out in our report on the Port Huron premiere of YOUNG TOM EDISON, the value of such openings must vary widely with the picture. It seems to depend on three factors:

1. *The cost of the premiere in relation to the cost of other kinds of advertising.*

Even in the case of VIRGINIA CITY where it seems evident that the premiere was effective, the justification of the device still hinges on the question of cost.

While the picture has reached a high level of publicity penetration, it has not broken any records. It would therefore seem fair to conclude that, if the cost of the premiere created *additional* expense beyond the normal advertising and publicity appropriation for a picture of this class, it would be open to question whether the premiere was justified.

On the other hand, if the expenditure on the premiere did not increase the normal appropriation, but merely diverted funds from other publicity channels, then the device seems to have been justified.

2. *The importance of the area surrounding the location as a source of revenue.*

The effectiveness of these premieres is found to be enormously greater in the immediate vicinity than in the country at large. More than 90% of movie-goers in Nevada (107 were interviewed in this state) had heard or read of the picture, and *all* these people knew about the premiere. But since Nevada contributes such an insignificant proportion of the total box-office receipts, this local penetration is of little more than academic interest.

3. *The suitability of the location for purposes of national exploitation.*

The VIRGINIA CITY premiere received a large volume of newspaper publicity, and while part of this was undoubtedly due to the fact that Hollywood columnists could more easily be taken to Nevada than to Michigan, it would also seem fair to conclude that editors consider Virginia City an intrinsically more newsworthy locale than Port Huron.

Further, while 66% of those movie-goers who knew about the VIRGINIA CITY premiere could also identify its locale, only 24% of those who knew about the YOUNG TOM EDISON premiere had registered the name of Port Huron. This evidence indicates that it is an asset if the name of the picture ties in with the site of the premiere.

One final table is worth presenting. In addition to the roster question reported above, specifically mentioning VIRGINIA CITY, movie-goers were asked this spontaneous-mention question:

"Recently several movies had their first showing in a place that had something to do with the story. For instance GONE WITH THE WIND had its first showing in Atlanta. Can you think of any other pictures that have had such special openings?"

Replies were as follows:

	%*
VIRGINIA CITY	13
UNION PACIFIC	10
DODGE CITY	10
YOUNG TOM EDISON	3
All Other	24
None	52

The significant point in this table is the fact that two pictures which are now a year old, UNION CITY and DODGE CITY, were recalled nearly as often as VIRGINIA CITY and more often than YOUNG TOM EDISON.

This suggests that the value of the device may decrease as it becomes more commonplace.

Princeton, April 22, 1940

* Replies exceed 100% as some respondents named more than one film.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT VII

THE MAYO BROTHERS

The public interest in medical subjects which is still being demonstrated both in our motion picture researches and also in studies of magazine reader-interest, suggested that a picture about the Mayo brothers might be worth subjecting to tests.

THE MAYO BROTHERS was therefore tested, without players, against one of our standard lists of control pictures, using the following synopsis:

"THE MAYO BROTHERS"

The drama of modern surgery, and its development from the crude methods of fifty years ago, told in this story about two doctors and their clinic in Minnesota. How the emergency hospital they organized to care for the victims of a train wreck became a world famous medical center.

The results of this test show that with the exception of GONE WITH THE WIND and NORTHWEST PASSAGE, THE MAYO BROTHERS has a higher audience acceptance value than any picture we have ever tested. It ranks higher than such successful pictures as MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON, BABES IN ARMS and DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK.

An analysis of the reasons given for selecting THE MAYO BROTHERS shows that 85% of movie-goers had specific knowledge of the Mayos or expressed an interest in surgery, hospitals, or medical science.

Another group of movie-goers were questioned about their reactions to six pictures based on the lives of famous Americans, including the Mayo brothers.

The following question was asked: 'Supposing the following six movies were showing on the same night, which one would you be most likely to see?'

BENEDICT ARNOLD, the traitor of the American Revolution
JOHN PAUL JONES, buccaneer father of the American Navy
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, the statesman who discovered electricity
GENERAL LEE, Confederate commander in the Civil War
THE MAYO BROTHERS, the pioneers of modern surgery
POCAHONTAS, the Indian Princess who married John Rolfe

The results were as follows:

	%
THE MAYO BROTHERS	45
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN	15
GENERAL LEE	14
JOHN PAUL JONES	10
BENEDICT ARNOLD	10
POCAHONTAS	5
Don't Know	1

It was decided to use an attitude scale in order to find out whether 'prestige' attaches to any of these personalities. It is suspected that this prestige factor, this taint of the school curriculum, may act as a serious obstacle to the success of some biographical pictures.

It was found that they all suffered in this respect, to a greater or less degree, with the single exception of the Mayo brothers, who were found to be almost completely immune from 'prestige'.

We would urge RKO to give the most careful consideration to the facts reported above. In the meantime, unless there are insurmountable obstacles to the production of a picture about the Mayo brothers, we would like to submit the idea to more detailed tests.

Princeton, April 23, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT VIII

LITTLE MEN

A nation-wide survey conducted by Audience Research Institute during the week ending April 20, 1940 revealed a high audience acceptance value for LITTLE MEN.

LITTLE MEN was tested, without personalities, against the ARMY SURGEON list of standard controls. The synopsis used was as follows:

"LITTLE MEN"

Louisa M. Alcott's story of life in a boy's school in 1880. How Professor Baher and his high-spirited wife find comedy and drama in working with their pupils.

In this test ARMY SURGEON, as is almost invariably the case, received most votes, and if this picture be considered 100, the other pictures ranked as follows:

ARMY SURGEON	100
LITTLE MEN	91
BIG TIMBER	62
EVERYTHING TO GAIN	44
WHAT ABOUT MARY?	32

The significant fact is that LITTLE MEN should come so close to equalling ARMY SURGEON—a most uncommon performance. It will be recalled that although several successful pictures have been pre-tested against ARMY SURGEON, only a very few of the biggest smash hits have ever defeated it, notably GONE WITH THE WIND and NORTHWEST PASSAGE. It is therefore no reflection on LITTLE MEN that it should have been exceeded by ARMY SURGEON.

LITTLE MEN received nearly five times as many votes as SANDA MALA, twice as many votes as ALLEGHENY UPRISING, and slightly more votes than THE WIZARD OF OZ.

Among women movie-goers LITTLE MEN actually received more votes than ARMY SURGEON. Among men it was markedly less strong.

An analysis of comments shows that 50% of those who selected LITTLE MEN had read the book, albeit often in childhood. Another 13% of those choosing this picture said they liked Louisa Alcott's books, while 11% specified that they chose LITTLE MEN because they had enjoyed LITTLE WOMEN.

A general interest in pictures about boys and boys' schools was adduced by 10% of those voting for LITTLE MEN. One respondent remarked: "I liked MR. CHIPS so this should be good."

It must be emphasized that this test was conducted without reference to personalities and without knowledge of the Towne & Baker treatment.

Princeton, April 25, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT IX

NELLIE BLY

This report will answer the question raised in your letter of March 29th, 1940: *Please let us have a reaction to the proposed production of a picture based on the life of NELLIE BLY.*

Evidence obtained by interviewing a national cross-section of movie-goers indicates that a picture about Nellie Bly would not have a strong audience acceptance value.

NELLIE BLY was tested, without reference to cast, against a standard list of hypothetical controls. The synopsis used was as follows:

"NELLIE BLY"

The story of a high-spirited girl who finds adventure and romance as the first woman reporter on a New York newspaper in the 1890's. Inspired by Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days", she sets out alone to better this record, and wins fame when she completes the tour in 72 days.

NELLIE BLY received 60% fewer votes than were cast for THE MAYO BROTHERS under identical conditions.

Other pictures which have done better than NELLIE BLY, when pre-tested against the same controls, include not only such box-office successes as MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON and HUNCHBACK, but also LADY OF THE TROPICS and VIGIL IN THE NIGHT.

It is perhaps significant that NELLIE BLY received its greatest vote from the age group over 31, and its smallest vote from the age group 12-17.

An analysis of comments shows that the most common reason for selecting NELLIE BLY was interest in newspaper work, which was mentioned twice as frequently as travel and adventure.

It must be remembered that NELLIE BLY was tested without reference to cast. Past experiments have suggested that, under test conditions, the audience acceptance value of pictures of this type may be adversely affected by the omission of cast.

Princeton, April 25, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT X

MY FAVORITE WIFE

In a nation-wide survey conducted between April 17 and April 20, 1940, Audience Research Institute tested the audience acceptance value of "MY FAVORITE WIFE". The synopsis used was as follows:

Cary Grant and Irene Dunne

in

"MY FAVORITE WIFE"

A light-hearted comedy about the plight of a young man who finds himself with two wives on his hands. Hilarious situations arise when wife Number One, having been declared legally dead, suddenly joins him at the hotel where he is spending his honeymoon with wife Number Two.

MY FAVORITE WIFE was tested against a standard list of controls, and was found to have an exceptionally high audience acceptance value.

An analysis of the comments recorded by our interviewers shows that the Grant-Dunne team is widely recognized and admired. No less than 39% of those who selected MY FAVORITE WIFE, gave the team as the reason for their selection. A further 10% mentioned Irene Dunne alone, while 7% mentioned Cary Grant alone.

A few of those who selected MY FAVORITE WIFE pointed out that "the plot sounds just like TOO MANY HUSBANDS", and half of these persons referred to the Columbia picture in unfavorable terms.

Only one uncertain factor restrains us from predicting great box-office success for MY FAVORITE WIFE. The picture's publicity penetration, as revealed in Index IV, is still low. Only one movie-goer in six has heard or read of it.

Princeton, April 30, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XI

IS FRED ASTAIRE WASHED-UP?

It has recently been suggested that the disappointing box-office performance of BROADWAY MELODY has been caused by a violent decline in the marquee value of Fred Astaire.

A study just completed by Audience Research Institute throws considerable doubt upon the validity of this assumption. In fact, all the evidence we have been able to collect suggests that whatever factors impeded the success of BROADWAY MELODY, Fred Astaire was not one of them.

Between April 24 and April 30 a national cross-section of movie-goers were asked if they planned to see BROADWAY MELODY. Those who replied that they had already seen it were subject to further questioning. They were asked what had decided them to see it. Their reasons were as follows:

Like Fred Astaire	33%
Like Eleanor Powell	25%
Like Musical Dancing Pictures	25%
Favorable Publicity	19%
Miscellaneous	22%*

It thus appears that Fred Astaire has sold more tickets to BROADWAY MELODY than any other sales factor. 32% more persons gave Fred Astaire than gave Eleanor Powell as their reason for attendance.

The next question asked was: Which player in the movie did you enjoy most?" The replies were as follows:

Fred Astaire	51%
Eleanor Powell	21%
George Murphy	12%
Frank Morgan	8%
All Others	2%

It thus appears that Fred Astaire's performance was enjoyed by more than twice as many persons as Eleanor Powell's performance, and more than four times as many persons as George Murphy's performance. More respondents voted for Fred Astaire than for all the rest of the cast combined.

* These percentages add to more than 100% because some respondents gave more than one reason.

Respondents were next asked: "What did you like least about BROADWAY MELODY?" Analysis of those replies which were given in terms of personalities, shows that:

49% referred to George Murphy
31% referred to Eleanor Powell
14% referred to Fred Astaire
6% referred to all others.

As a final question, all those who had seen BROADWAY MELODY were asked: "Do you think you will probably see the next picture Fred Astaire makes or not?" 89% said YES. It therefore appears that BROADWAY MELODY has not seriously damaged Fred Astaire's marquee value.

Those movie-goers who had not yet seen BROADWAY MELODY, but still planned to see it, were asked to give their reasons for wanting to see the picture. Once again Fred Astaire was named as the chief attraction, this time by 22% more persons than Eleanor Powell.

When those movie-goers who definitely planned to stay away from BROADWAY MELODY were asked for their reasons, exactly twice as many named Eleanor Powell as Fred Astaire as the chief deterrent.

The final question asked was this: "Suppose two musical pictures were showing tonight, one with Fred Astaire and Eleanor Powell, and one with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, which would you be most likely to see?" In spite of the fact that an Astaire-Rogers picture has not been released for more than a year

68% voted for Astaire and Rogers
32% voted for Astaire and Powell

Even those who had just seen BROADWAY MELODY voted two to one in favor of Astaire and Rogers.

In a subsequent survey Audience Research Institute asked: "Suppose two movies were showing on the same night—one a musical picture with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and one a light comedy with David Niven and Ginger Rogers. Which would you be most likely to see?"

56% voted for Astaire and Rogers
44% voted for Niven and Rogers

The evidence obtained in these two surveys seems to justify these conclusions:

- 1) The unsatisfactory box-office performance of BROADWAY MELODY cannot fairly be blamed on Fred Astaire.
- 2) The fact reported in our Report I, of March 21, has not been altered by the disappointing box-office performance of BROADWAY MELODY. That fact is that the public would rather see Ginger Rogers in another dancing picture with Fred Astaire than in another comedy.

Princeton, May 15, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XII

SMILER WITH A KNIFE, HEART OF DARKNESS or INVASION FROM MARS?

Audience Research Institute was asked to find out whether ticket-buyers would prefer to see Orson Welles in *SMILER WITH A KNIFE*, in *HEART OF DARKNESS*, or in *INVASION FROM MARS*.

Two nation-wide surveys have revealed that *INVASION FROM MARS* has a substantially greater audience acceptance value than the other two properties.

Two different research procedures were employed to test the comparative value of these pictures, and the results obtained from the two procedures were substantially the same.

First, each picture was tested against one constant control. In this test *INVASION FROM MARS* received the highest rating, and if this picture is given the value of 100, then the three pictures rated as follows:

INVASION FROM MARS	100
HEART OF DARKNESS	73
SMILER WITH A KNIFE	73

These results show that the audience acceptance values of *HEART OF DARKNESS* and *SMILER WITH A KNIFE* are approximately equal, and that *INVASION FROM MARS* received 37% more votes than either of them.

In the second test, a national cross-section of movie-goers were asked the following question: "Hollywood is wondering which of these three stories would be most popular for Orson Welles' first movie. Which one would *you* be most likely to go to?" Here again *INVASION FROM MARS* received more votes than the other two properties, in the following proportions:

INVASION FROM MARS	100
HEART OF DARKNESS	60
SMILER WITH A KNIFE	60

An analysis of the reasons offered for preferring *INVASION FROM MARS* shows that public curiosity in regard to Orson Welles is harnessed to the recollection of his most famous radio broadcast. The comment of a truck driver in Washington, Iowa, is typical: "I heard the radio story and I'd like to see it. It was so real it was awful".

Dr. Hadley Cantril estimates* that 6,000,000 people heard the broadcast—approximately the number of people who would see a Broadway play which ran for eight years.

* In *THE INVASION FROM MARS*, Princeton University Press. This estimate is based on a study made at the time by the American Institute of Public Opinion, of which Dr. George Gallup is Director.

And for every one person who told our interviewers that they had actually heard the broadcast, two others said that they regretted missing it and would welcome an opportunity to see a picture based upon the same subject. Typical was the comment of a Baltimore insurance salesman, "I'd like to see whether I'd be as simple as the ones who heard the broadcast".

It would not be safe to assume that the comparative lack of interest in *HEART OF DARKNESS* and *SMILER WITH A KNIFE* was due to any inadequacy in the synopses. Our respondents were given at least as much information as would be in their possession if these pictures were actually showing today, so that they made their choice under conditions of realism.

Careful scrutiny of the comments on *HEART OF DARKNESS* suggests that the public would react unfavorably to the somewhat gloomy atmosphere of Conrad's story. Our study also suggests that RKO would experience a little difficulty in persuading the public that this picture differed materially from run-of-mill African jungle pictures.

Similarly our study suggests that it would not be easy to convince the average movie-goer that *SMILER WITH A KNIFE* is not a stereotyped whodunit. (A few parents observed that they would not want their children to see this picture—"I don't think such things should be shown to children. The effects are terrible".)

Both *SMILER WITH A KNIFE* and *HEART OF DARKNESS* received more votes on account of Orson Welles than on account of the story. But *INVASION FROM MARS* received twice as many votes on account of its story as on account of Mr. Welles. It would thus appear that *INVASION FROM MARS* has a higher intrinsic appeal than the other two stories.

All the evidence obtained in these surveys indicates that public curiosity in regard to Mr. Welles tends to be orientated in the direction of the Mars broadcast. There is evidently a ready-made market for a picture based on that broadcast, and the same cannot be said of *HEART OF DARKNESS* or *SMILER WITH A KNIFE*.

As of today, more people say they would buy tickets for *INVASION FROM MARS* than for either of the other pictures.

Next week we hope to report how *Cyrano de Bergerac* stacks up against the three pictures studied in this report.

Princeton, May 15, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XIII

NELLIE BLY II

On April 25, we reported that "NELLIE BLY", when tested without reference to cast, had been found to have a low audience acceptance value. To this finding, however, we added this important qualification: "Past experiments have suggested that, under test conditions, the audience acceptance value of pictures of this type may be adversely affected by the omission of cast".

Results of a second test of "NELLIE BLY", just completed, have confirmed this prediction, showing that the omission of cast in this instance did in fact adversely affect the picture's audience acceptance value. In the second test, Jean Arthur and Cary Grant were cast, and the picture emerged with a considerably higher rating.

With these stars, the picture ranks higher in audience value than "THE AMERICAN WAY", "KITTY FOYLE", "VIGIL IN THE NIGHT", "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL", and "LADY OF THE TROPICS". It does not, however, rank as high as "MY FAVORITE WIFE", "BABES IN ARMS", or "HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME".

Analysis of the reasons offered by movie-goers for wanting to see "NELLIE BLY" reveals the fact that 26% said they liked Cary Grant and Jean Arthur. The majority of this group thought of the two stars as a team. An additional 12% gave a liking for Jean Arthur as their reason, and seven per cent mentioned Cary Grant.

While our report on "MY FAVORITE WIFE" showed an even larger group wanting to see the picture because of Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, the difference is not surprising in view of the fact that these two have appeared together more often than have Cary Grant and Jean Arthur.

Princeton, May 15, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XIV

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

On April 30 Audience Research Institute was asked to measure the audience acceptance value of Orson Welles in CYRANO DE BERGERAC.

The problem was approached from three angles: first, to measure the value of CYRANO DE BERGERAC in relation to SMILER WITH A KNIFE, HEART OF DARKNESS and INVASION FROM MARS; second, to measure the value of CYRANO DE BERGERAC in relation to pictures whose box-office performance is already known; and third, to measure the number of movie-goers who have ever heard of CYRANO DE BERGERAC.

First, a nation-wide survey revealed that CYRANO DE BERGERAC has a slightly higher audience acceptance value than HEART OF DARKNESS or SMILER WITH A KNIFE, but a substantially lower value than INVASION FROM MARS. The public ranked these properties in this order:

INVASION FROM MARS	100
CYRANO DE BERGERAC	79
HEART OF DARKNESS	73
SMILER WITH A KNIFE	73

Next, CYRANO DE BERGERAC was tested with Orson Welles against a standard set of control pictures, and its audience acceptance value was found to be below normal. It ranked approximately the same as VIGIL IN THE NIGHT, but considerably lower than all the other pictures which have recently been tested against the same set of controls; these include NELLIE BLY, KITTY FOYLE, THE AMERICAN WAY and MY FAVORITE WIFE.

Scrutiny of the actual comments recorded verbatim by our interviewers shows that the lack of public interest in CYRANO DE BERGERAC is chiefly due to three factors: the story is set in a period of history in which movie-goers appeared to be little interested, it is a costume piece, and the background is foreign. Typical were the following reactions:

"I don't like old-fashioned shows"

"No foreign stuff"

"I don't like knee pants on men—don't like costume plays"

While these factors are obviously not insuperable obstacles to a picture's success (as we discovered in early tests of HUNCHBACK) the evidence indicates that CYRANO DE BERGERAC does not possess the other elements required to offset these negatives factors.

Our recent supplementary report on ORSON WELLES and PUBLIC OPINION showed that movie-goers do not primarily think of Mr. Welles as a romantic personality, and in this survey the articulate minority confessed to some difficulty in visualizing Orson Welles in the part of Cyrano. Said a librarian in Sioux City: "Orson Welles couldn't be romantic enough. Colman should be in it".

In an earlier survey, conducted during January 1940, CYRANO DE BERGERAC was tested with Vivien Leigh and Lawrence Olivier, and although neither GONE WITH THE WIND nor REBECCA were at that time in circulation, Leigh and Olivier gave CYRANO DE BERGERAC an audience acceptance value 40% higher than it showed when it was tested with Orson Welles. This finding suggests that the acceptance value of CYRANO DE BERGERAC is dependent on a recognized team of romantic personalities.

Our survey revealed that only one movie-goer in five had ever heard of CYRANO DE BERGERAC. It was somewhat disturbing to find that even among this small minority who knew about CYRANO, half said they would not be interested in seeing it on the screen.

It has been suggested that the boys and girls who have to study CYRANO DE BERGERAC in schools and colleges would be interested in seeing the picture, but we have reason to believe that any taint of the school curriculum is often a grievous handicap to a picture's success at the box-office. A college student in New Brunswick told one of our interviewers: "It just doesn't appeal. I had to translate it in school".

Movie-goers were found to be embarrassed by the difficulty of pronouncing CYRANO DE BERGERAC, and it is probable that this embarrassment would militate against the success of the picture by impeding the momentum of its word-of-mouth publicity.

In a survey conducted during December 1939 movie-goers were asked: "Here are four stories that are being made into movies. Which one do you think would make the best movie?" While the answers to this question were not intended to provide a prediction of box-office performance, it was thought that they would provide an estimate of the popularity of the four stories at that time. The stories, with the votes they received, were as follows:

NORTHWEST PASSAGE	44%
REBECCA*	28%
GRAPES OF WRATH	25%
CYRANO DE BERGERAC	3%

Audience Research Institute has now devoted several surveys to Orson Welles and his properties. In every survey we have found a large measure of curiosity in Mr. Welles, but INVASION FROM MARS is the only one of the four properties so far tested which seems likely to make any appreciable contribution to Mr. Welles' success at the box-office.

Princeton, May 18, 1940

* At this time REBECCA had not been serialized in the newspapers.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XV

IDENTIFICATION OF ORSON WELLES

We have already reported the results of an earlier study which showed that 84% of theatre-goers were familiar with Orson Welles' name. Nearly all these persons, when asked what they knew about Mr. Welles, associated him with the radio, although a sizeable group mentioned his connection with motion pictures or the stage.

We have just completed a more rigorous test. A national cross-section of theatre-goers were handed photographs of Clark Gable, Fredric March, Maureen O'Hara and Orson Welles, and were asked to identify them. Although no clues or suggestions of any kind were given, nearly half the persons interviewed were able to identify Orson Welles.

Even more surprising is the fact that Orson Welles was identified by nearly as many persons as Fredric March.

The results were as follows:

	<i>% Identifying</i>
Clark Gable	97
Fredric March	52
Orson Welles with beard	48
Orson Welles without beard	43
Maureen O'Hara	4

In selecting the photographs for identification, we deliberately chose one outstanding star who would have maximum recognition value, one established but less prominent star, and one "dark horse". This selection gave us three different reference points for comparison with Orson Welles.

There were some rather interesting cases of misidentification. Three per cent identified Fredric March as Franchot Tone, nineteen per cent mistook Maureen O'Hara for Vivien Leigh, and four per cent thought that Mr. Welles with beard was Paul Muni.

Princeton, June 12, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XVI

The Audience Acceptance Value of War Pictures

On May 24, 1940, RKO RADIO asked Audience Research Institute to investigate the attitude of theatre-goers towards war pictures.

The recent findings of the American Institute of Public Opinion show that public opinion in relation to the war is in an extremely fluid condition. Thus while it is possible to measure the attitude of the public on subjects connected with the war *as of today*, it would be difficult to predict with accuracy what changes in public opinion will take place in the period of time required for the completion of a motion picture. In such a kaleidoscopic situation it is not easy to advise any long-term policy in relation to the production of war pictures.

The New York Times reports a division of sentiment on this subject among motion picture executives, and the evidence so far assembled by Audience Research Institute indicates a corresponding division among theatre-goers themselves.

In surveys conducted during the last month, we measured the acceptance value of four different war stories. In every case their value was found to be substantially higher among male than among female theatre-goers.

Two of these war stories were found to have an exceptionally high overall acceptance value, but the other two were only moderate. This finding is one more confirmation of the widely held belief that no *type* of story is ever either infallibly successful or infallibly unsuccessful. It would seem fair to conclude that if a producer has access to an exceptionally good war story, then its production would be indicated at this time. But it is by no means safe to assume that any run-of-mill war story would be successful; the public continues to discriminate.

One of the war stories recently tested by Audience Research Institute was a revised version of our control picture, ARMY SURGEON, using the following synopsis:

The adventures of a British surgeon in a hospital in the Maginot Line during the present World War, and how a nurse risks disgrace to go to his aid in an emergency.

As usual ARMY SURGEON was found to have an exceptionally high audience acceptance value. Analysis of comments shows that when asked why they would or would not see it, 18% replied to the effect that "there is too much war in the papers and on the radio without going to see it in the movies". But at the same time 28% said yes they would see it "because of its current interest", or because they "like war pictures".*

* Only a mere handful chose ARMY SURGEON on account of its sex interest.

This division of opinion can best be illustrated by reporting a representative selection of the actual comments recorded by our interviewers.

AGAINST WAR STORIES

Nothing doing—I wouldn't see a war picture on a bet.

I see too much of the war in newsreels, papers and radio.

I already have it as a steady diet.

In a few years I might like to see it, but not now; it's still too close to home.

I have plenty of troubles—want to relax at a show.

Like something to take my mind off things as they are today.

Why don't they make pictures of comedy-mystery, and forget about war pictures?

Son in World War; horrible; dislike all hints of war.

It's still war—I was in the last one. I hate it.

IN FAVOR OF WAR STORIES

I am interested in the war.

I like war pictures, anything about war.

They would probably show some new war equipment.

Interested in modern warfare methods, how they move troops quickly, etc.

To see how they work their ammunition in the war.

Out of morbid curiosity I'd go to see it.

Would go but bawl all through it.

Right now a fellow has to find out just what war is like.

Interesting today. We may have to fight soon ourselves. I guess we'll have to know about it.

Might be enlightening as far as the European situation is concerned.

☛ *Of vital interest to everyone now.*

It would be very interesting because it's up to the minute.

There is no doubt that part of the vote for war pictures derives from the popular appetite for pictures about *today*. In all our research we have found that the public is most interested in stories of modern times—an observation which was recently confirmed when we asked: "Which would you enjoy most, a present-day picture or a picture about old times?" 65% expressed a preference for the present-day, 35% for old times.

In a survey conducted between May 3 and May 18, 1940, we asked: "Which would you enjoy more, a picture about the current war or a picture about the Civil War?" 62% voted for the current war, against 38% for the Civil War. The vote for the current war would perhaps have been even greater if GONE WITH THE WIND had not so recently revived public interest in the Civil War period.

Whether or not the screen can perform a patriotic service by manufacturing partisan pictures is a separate problem, and one upon which public opinion cannot usefully be asked to pass judgment. These preliminary studies have been confined to measuring the audience acceptance value of war pictures, quite apart from their propaganda value to the Government. However, it is pertinent to record that many theatre-goers feel they *ought* to see war pictures, because "they would give us an idea what to expect if it ever comes over here".

Princeton, June 21, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XVII

TITLES FOR STUNT MAN STORY

On June 26, 1940 you asked Audience Research Institute to find out the public's order of preference on four titles: STUNT MAN, NINE LIVES, PROFESSIONAL HERO and I'M STILL ALIVE. These titles were under consideration for a picture which synthesizes as follows:

"A Hollywood stunt man loves and marries a successful movie star. He sacrifices his career to appease her, but his failure to find a new job jeopardizes their marriage. After they have separated he undertakes a hazardous stunt which not only saves the life of a friend, but reunites him with his glamorous wife."

In a survey conducted between July 2 and July 9 we asked a national cross-section of theatre-goers this question: "Here are the titles of four movies being planned in Hollywood. Offhand, judging from the titles alone, which would you be most likely to see?" The voting was as follows:

I'M STILL ALIVE	30%
NINE LIVES	28%
PROFESSIONAL HERO	27%
STUNT MAN	15%

Our interviewers were instructed to record all comments *verbatim*. Analysis of these comments shows that all four titles are somewhat misleading.

It was found that to a majority of theatre-goers the title NINE LIVES suggests a mystery picture, while others thought it would be about cats, or the biographies of nine people. A few theatre-goers volunteered that NINE LIVES was a Boris Karloff picture—perhaps confusing it with THE MAN THEY COULD NOT HANG.

PROFESSIONAL HERO was found to suggest to a large percentage of theatre-goers a picture about doctors, attorneys or some other profession. Other respondents thought it would be about football, baseball, boxing, or some other sport.

Almost all the theatre-goers who voted for STUNT MAN guessed that this would be an aviation picture.

I'M STILL ALIVE aroused more curiosity than the other three titles, but there was something about it which suggested that it would be a funny comedy. It would seem to us that any suggestion of farce would be undesirable.

We would welcome an opportunity to test other titles for this picture.

Princeton, July 11, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XVIII

ANALYSIS OF PUBLICITY PENETRATION

During the last four months Audience Research Institute has measured the publicity penetration of more than fifty pictures. While sufficient data have not yet been accumulated to justify any conclusions as to the value of specific publicity techniques, it is now possible to analyze our findings in general terms.

We have found that there is very considerable variation in the effectiveness of different publicity campaigns. For example, two weeks after BUCK BENNY RIDES AGAIN, the publicity for this picture had reached 55,250,000 theatre-goers. By contrast, only 20,800,000 theatre-goers had been reached by the publicity for PRIMROSE PATH at the identical point in that picture's life history.

The average publicity penetration of RKO Radio's A pictures is 17,120,000 two weeks before release, and 28,820,000 two weeks after release. The corresponding figures for A pictures produced by other studios are 26,000,000 two weeks before release and 44,760,000 two weeks after release.

While these figures seem to indicate that RKO publicity may be somewhat below average in effectiveness, we have not yet assembled enough points of reference to justify any general conclusion to that effect.

The objection has been raised that titles like LILLIAN RUSSELL, IRENE, TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS and PRIMROSE PATH are apt to get high publicity penetration "because the public has heard such names for years and more or less automatically says YES when asked if it has heard about them".

We ourselves recognized this danger during our earliest experiments, and we have taken the following precautions to eliminate any "Yes" votes which could not be substantiated:

- (1) Respondents are not only asked whether they have heard about the picture, but they are also cross-examined about the identity of the star, what the picture is about, and so on.
- (2) On every Publicity Penetration questionnaire we include a non-existent picture with a well-known title, such as GENERAL LEE OF VIRGINIA. Only six per cent say they have heard about this imaginary picture.

It is therefore evident that our procedures do not seriously overvalue the publicity penetration of pictures with well-known titles.

The objection has also been raised that there is no correlation between our Index of Publicity Penetration and actual box-office figures. This is of course entirely natural. If the relationship were direct, box-office success would simply depend on a producer's ability to out-spend his competitors on advertising and publicity. Effective advertising and publicity cannot turn a bad picture into a smash hit; they can only add an important *plus*.

This is not the place to examine the cause of high publicity penetration, or to suggest an explanation for the apparent relationship of RKO publicity to the average. But there is one general observation which occurs to us in regard to *all* film advertising:

When a product is new, it can be sold by crude "announcement" advertising. But when the novelty wears off, it becomes necessary to abandon "announcement" advertising and have recourse to "persuasion" advertising with its highly developed techniques of copy strategy and layout.

The advertisers of automobiles, cameras, refrigerators and air travel (who also began in the crude announcement stage), have completed the transition to "persuasion". But motion picture advertising is still in the announcement stage, and it is still rare to see any film campaign which attempts to do a job of active salesmanship.

We believe that the cumulative effect of this failure to graduate from announcement advertising to persuasion advertising has contributed to the decline of national attendances.

It has recently been pointed out that the best compensation for the loss of foreign markets would be for the advertising and publicity departments to reach 25,000,000 more domestic theatre-goers than formerly. Our surveys indicate that this objective should not be impossible of attainment. *As of today, only 40,000,000 theatre-goers are being reached by the advertising and publicity for the average A picture.*

Princeton, July 24, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XIX

VARIATIONS IN THE COMPOSITION OF AUDIENCES

For many years it has been generally supposed that the average theatre audience is predominantly female, and estimates as high as 65% female have passed unchallenged.

A study just completed by Audience Research Institute reveals that such estimates are completely inaccurate. The average sex composition of film audiences is 50.5% female and 49.5% male.

This finding is based on a check of 54,462 theatre-goers outside 50 theatres throughout the United States over a period of one week, including matinees and evening performances. It was confirmed by a second survey in which a national cross-section of theatre-goers were questioned as to the pictures they had seen in recent weeks.

Our survey revealed another fact which should be of very real value to RKO Radio. It is this: However much producers may try to give their pictures universal appeal, there is in fact considerable variation in the composition of audiences from picture to picture.

For example, the audiences for REBECCA were 71% female, while the audiences for THE FIGHTING 69TH were only 38% female.

The *age* composition of audiences likewise varies widely from picture to picture. Both BABES IN ARMS and SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON attracted 33% more than the normal proportion of children between the ages of twelve and seventeen. By contrast the audiences for ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS were 28% above normal in their proportion of persons *over 31 years*.

There is an even greater variation in the composition of audiences by income groups. Thus the proportion of the "Prosperous" group in the audiences for MY FAVORITE WIFE was 55% *above* normal, while the proportion of "Prosperous" in the audiences for ROAD TO SINGAPORE was 33% *below* normal.

Again, some pictures attract an unusual number of those persons who go to the movies less than five times a year. A notable example was GONE WITH THE WIND, which ran 110% above normal in this respect.

It is now possible for the audience appeal of every picture to be analyzed *before production*. And one of the practical applications of this procedure is that it should enable your publicity department to aim their advertising with *accuracy* at those segments of the market for which each picture is found to have greatest appeal.

Such precision should reduce the purchase of waste circulation, and so save RKO money.

Princeton, July 29, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XX

DARK HORSES

In March 1937 Audience Research Institute conducted an experimental survey to determine which of seventy-five "dark horses" showed greatest promise of rising to top-flight marquee value.

From a roster of seventy-five personalities we selected the following as being the most promising long-term investments:

Charles Boyer
Madeleine Carroll
Melvyn Douglas
Deanna Durbin
Alice Faye
Henry Fonda
Olivia de Havilland
Rochelle Hudson
Merle Oberon
Tyrone Power
Luise Rainer
Randolph Scott
Ann Sothern
James Stewart

Today it is perhaps difficult to believe that these personalities could have been classed as Dark Horses so recently as March 1937. But reference to the Motion Picture Herald poll of January 1937 shows that Madeleine Carroll, Melvyn Douglas, Deanna Durbin, Tyrone Power and James Stewart did not then rank amongst the first two hundred; Charles Boyer, Alice Faye, Olivia de Havilland, Rochelle Hudson, Luise Rainer, Randolph Scott and Ann Sothern ranked lower than eighty-fifth; Henry Fonda and Merle Oberon ranked lower than fifty-sixth.

While these fourteen Dark Horses have not all justified our selection, it is at least open to question whether any Hollywood executive could have picked so many future winners without the guidance of a scientific poll.

In July 1940 we repeated the same poll.

Its dollars and cents value to RKO Radio will depend on the extent to which you are now able to invest in the personalities at the top of the poll, and the extent to which you are able to remain free from long-term commitments to the personalities at the bottom of the poll.

The results of our study, which was conducted between May 2 and June 11, 1940, do not represent the *present* marquee values of these sixty personalities.* *They represent a prediction of their marquee values three years from today.*

It would be idle to suppose that these predictions will turn out to be infallibly correct in every case. Just as Luise Rainer and Rochelle Hudson have failed to achieve the success which was predicted for them in April 1937, so it is inevitable that some of this year's leading Dark Horses will fall by the wayside. Subsequent polls will detect any signs of slipping, and will also uncover any new promise among Dark Horses who have not yet distinguished themselves.

Marquee Values in 1943

JEFFREY LYNN	First
JOAN FONTAINE	Second
LINDA DARNELL	Third
GLORIA JEAN	Fourth
LANA TURNER	Fifth
GEORGE MURPHY	Sixth
ANNA NEAGLE	Seventh
INGRID BERGMAN	Eighth
MAUREEN O'HARA	Ninth
RONALD REAGAN	Tenth
Jackie Cooper	11
Jane Wyman	12
John Wayne	13
Jane Bryan	13
Nancy Kelly	15
Jon`Hall	16
Brenda Joyce	17
John Payne	18
Tim Holt	19
Freddie Bartholomew	20
Mary Martin	21
Laraine Day	22
Jean Parker	23
John Howard	24
Patric Knowles	25
Betty Field	25
James Ellison	27
Kent Taylor	28
Douglas McPhail	29
Joan Carroll	30
Nan Grey	31
Anita Louise	32
Bonita Granville	32
Dennis O'Keefe	34
Donald Woods	35
Ruth Hussey	36
Marjorie Weaver	37
Ellen Drew	38

* List supplied by RKO Radio.

Betty Jaynes	39
Virginia Field	40
Dick Hogan	41
Jimmy Lydon	42
Lynn Bari	43
Lucille Ball	44
Ann Miller	45
Michele Morgan	45
Arleen Whelan	47
Phyllis Brooks	48
John Archer	49
June Lang	50
Helen Parrish	50
Martha Scott	52
Jean Muir	53
Gale Storm	54
Adele Pearce	55
Diana Lewis	56
Linda Hayes	57
Virginia Vale	58
Jane Patten	59
Elaine Shepard	60

Our study revealed that two Dark Horses, who were not included in the list supplied to us by RKO, show considerable promise and might even rank among the first ten. They are Greer Garson and Bobs Watson.

It cannot be over-emphasized that the above ranking does not represent the comparative marquee values of these personalities *today*. In terms of today, the ranking would be entirely different.

As of today, the first ten personalities on your list are, in order of their *present* marquee values:

- (1) Jackie Cooper
- (2) Joan Fontaine
- (3) Jeffrey Lynn
- (4) Freddie Bartholomew
- (5) Linda Darnell
- (6) Lana Turner
- (7) George Murphy
- (8) Gloria Jean
- (9) Maureen O'Hara
- (10) Nancy Kelly

In order to arrive at our estimate of *future* marquee values, we measured the *intensity* of each personality's following. This procedure revealed that some of the personalities who rank high today are unlikely to maintain their position, while certain other personalities, whose identity is known to only a few theatre-goers today, are likely to climb to the top.

For example, we predict that in three years' time Jackie Cooper will not be in the first ten; today he is first. Similarly, we predict that in three years' time Freddie Bartholomew will not be in the first nineteen; today he is fourth.

By contrast, we predict that Ingrid Bergman, who today ranks lower than twenty-fifth, will be found amongst the first seven in 1943.

Princeton, August 14, 1940.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXI

SUE BARTON

In January, 1940, Audience Research Institute asked a representative cross-section of public librarians in small towns: "What is the most popular children's book in your library?"

The titles mentioned most frequently were:

1. Pinocchio
2. SUE BARTON RURAL NURSE
3. The Wizard of Oz
4. Gulliver's Travels

Since the other three stories on this list had already been made into motion pictures, we confined further study to SUE BARTON RURAL NURSE.

SUE BARTON RURAL NURSE is the most recent in a series of novels by Helen Dove Boylston; the other titles having been SUE BARTON STUDENT NURSE, SUE BARTON SENIOR NURSE, and SUE BARTON VISITING NURSE.

In June, 1940, according to reports from the public libraries of twenty-six cities, SUE BARTON RURAL NURSE was still in second place among children's books, being exceeded only by PINOCCHIO.

This continued popularity suggested to us that it would be interesting to test the audience acceptance value of a motion picture based on SUE BARTON.

The results of this test demonstrate that, while SUE BARTON is not in a class with THE MAYO BROTHERS, it nevertheless demonstrates a sufficiently high audience appeal to deserve very serious consideration as material for one or more program pictures.

Miss Boylston's heroine is "a high-spirited and courageous young nurse with a temper that matches her red hair". Her adventures are entirely free from the grimness which characterized Mr. Cronin's VIGIL IN THE NIGHT.

Our survey shows that SUE BARTON has great appeal for women, and greatest appeal of all for girls in their teens—i.e. for that segment of the population which is most likely to be familiar with the Sue Barton books.

Audience Research Institute urges RKO Radio to give careful consideration to the feasibility of making one or more program pictures based on the adventures of SUE BARTON.

Princeton, August 19, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXII

AN AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY

On various occasions in the past we have discussed with Mr. Schaefer the possible audience appeal of Dr. Victor Heiser's best-seller, *AN AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY*, produced either as a documentary, or as background for a more orthodox treatment.

Your present concentration on properties of light entertainment suggests that for the time being your inclination may be to avoid any more serious subjects.

The following considerations, however, occur to us as having a bearing on the point:

1. At a time when almost all producers are concentrating on light subjects, it may not be too early to start looking forward to the time when such subjects may have temporarily exhausted their welcome.
2. We find that up to June 1940 *AN AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY* had sold 315,000 copies, and had been read by approximately 2,000,000 people throughout the United States.
3. Dr. Victor Heiser is an *American* doctor, and is therefore more interesting to theatre-goers than Dr. Ehrlich.

For these reasons Audience Research Institute proceeded to test the acceptance value of *AN AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY*, using the following synopsis:

A picture based on Dr. Victor Heiser's famous autobiography. You see him organizing the fight against disease in the Philippines, China, India and the United States. Working for the Rockefeller Foundation, he overcomes native ignorance and superstition to control epidemics of bubonic plague, leprosy, smallpox and malaria.

AN AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY was found to have a lower audience acceptance value than *THE MAYO BROTHERS*, but a higher value than *MR. AND MRS. SMITH*, *THE AMERICAN WAY*, *LUCKY PARTNERS*, and *THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED*.

As in the case of *MY FAVORITE WIFE*, we find that *AN AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY* would attract an unusually high proportion of the upper income group.

It is therefore probable that this picture would bring into the theatre a useful number of those 32,000,000 who could afford to go to the movies whenever they wish but who now go less often than once a month.

The resemblance of Dr. Heiser's story to *ARROWSMITH* suggests that *AN AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY* might deserve consideration as a vehicle for Ronald Colman.

Princeton, August 19, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXIII

For The Record

In order to refine and improve our techniques for measuring the audience acceptance value of pictures, we recently completed a series of experimental tests concerning five forthcoming pictures.

The pictures tested were BOOM TOWN, ESCAPE, NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE, NO TIME FOR COMEDY, and HAUNTED HONEYMOON.

The tests were conducted between June 12 and July 26, before any of the pictures had been released, and before the pre-release publicity effort had reached the peak.

Certain facts uncovered in the course of these experiments may be of interest to RKO Radio.

ESCAPE

The acceptance value of the *story* of ESCAPE, without reference to cast, proved to be outstanding. Thus, although the marquee value of the stars is only moderate, the audience acceptance value of this picture is higher than that of the average A production.

We believe that ESCAPE should reach or exceed 120% on your Classification of Pictures, provided, of course, that the direction capitalizes adequately on the story possibilities.

This fact is particularly interesting in view of the current belief that the public does not want Nazi pictures. In this connection, it is significant that many persons said they wanted to see ESCAPE not because it dealt with the Nazis, but because it sounds like a "thriller".

In other words, this is a story which is interesting in itself; its appeal does not depend upon timeliness or upon political significance alone. Here is one more piece of evidence demonstrating the hazards of generalizing about *types of story* without testing the specific story under consideration.

Interest in ESCAPE is enormously stimulated by the fact that the book was a best-seller. We have been aware for some time that the special appeal of a best-seller is not confined to those who have read the book, but extends also to those who think they *ought* to have read it. Said a commercial artist in New York; "*My time for reading books is limited. I see the best-sellers in the movies when I can.*"

This, of course, does not imply that all best-sellers should be made into pictures; but it does suggest an angle that might be more fully exploited.

It is interesting to note that while ESCAPE has high audience acceptance value for all income groups, it is relatively strongest among the highest economic group—the group whose increased support is so important if national attendances are to be boosted.

BOOM TOWN

The audience acceptance value of BOOM TOWN, as cast, has been phenomenally high in each test we have conducted. We predict that the picture should reach 180% on your Classification of Pictures.*

In view of the enormous concentration of marquee strength in BOOM TOWN, it is interesting to record that the audience acceptance value of the *story alone, without reference to stars*, while high, is by no means record-breaking. This fact was established by a test in which star names were omitted.

Our finding demonstrates that, while the marquee value of BOOM TOWN is probably the maximum possible, the story is not correspondingly strong.

It will be interesting to see whether maximum cast with less than maximum story will justify the huge investment involved.

The trade press has referred to BOOM TOWN as Metro's effort to produce another GONE WITH THE WIND. But it is evident that they have not followed the GONE WITH THE WIND formula. The *story* of GONE WITH THE WIND was one of the strongest of all time, as revealed by our own tests more than six months in advance of release, as well as by the sale of the book; the *cast*, while strong, had only one big marquee name. In BOOM TOWN, the situation in respect to the relative strength of the two elements—story and cast—is reversed. The cast is relatively stronger than the story.

It is important to remember that there is bound to be considerable overlapping between the followings of any four major stars. For that reason the marquee strength of BOOM TOWN is not as high as the aggregate indices of Tracy, Gable, Colbert, and Lamarr.

NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE

Public interest in the *story* of NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE, without reference to stars, was found to be actually greater than that of BOOM TOWN.

As might be expected, the appeal of this picture is substantially higher among men than among woman, and highest of all among the younger theatre-goers.

NO TIME FOR COMEDY

Theatre-goers were found to recognize the comedy implications of the Stewart-Russell team. Said one, "She's crazy and the two together look like a good show." At the same time it must be remembered that, while there are only three male personalities with a higher marquee value than James Stewart, Rosalind Russell ranks only twenty-first among female personalities.

*This estimate may be affected if BOOM TOWN is generally shown at advanced prices. Up to date we are not in possession of sufficient data on the influence of price adjustment to enable us to make accurate allowance for this contingency.

The appeal of NO TIME FOR COMEDY is greater for women than for men. Otherwise, interest in the picture is fairly evenly distributed among all groups of theatre-goers, except that it finds somewhat less support among patrons under eighteen years of age.

Many persons said they would see the picture simply because it "sounds light and amusing." In the words of one astute individual, "The story sounds good, even if it's not unusual."

HAUNTED HONEYMOON

This picture is the least promising of the five, on the basis of its current audience acceptance value. Comments indicate that its support comes almost entirely from mystery fans.

The picture was tested under its original Dorothy Sayers title—BUSMAN'S HONEYMOON; but only a handful of respondents showed previous knowledge of the book.

Reference to the second edition of the Audit of Marquee Values shows that Robert Montgomery's marquee value has not been enhanced by his sojourn in France.

Princeton, August 27, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXIV

How Accurate Are Our Results?

The question has been asked: How accurate is the Gallup Poll in the field of motion pictures? This report will answer that question in specific terms.

During the first six months of our work for RKO Radio we have been able to make considerable progress in perfecting our techniques for measuring the audience acceptance value of motion pictures.

There is, of course, a difference between a picture's inherent audience acceptance value and its actual performance at the box-office. The variables which intervene between our pre-production polls and the release of the picture will always prevent the prediction of box-office with *mathematical* accuracy.

The first and most obvious intermediate variable is *direction*. But as a matter of fact we have found that direction is *very seldom* either good enough or bad enough to upset our predictions.

The second major variable is publicity penetration. We have found that, while publicity is never the dominant factor in determining a picture's failure or success, it is sometimes responsible for blurring the accuracy of our predictions.

In spite of the difficulty of controlling these variables, we have found that we can—with a high degree of precision—predict whether a picture will be a smash hit, a complete failure, or average. And in some recent box-office predictions we have attained an even more spectacular standard of accuracy.

Several months ago we measured the audience acceptance value of four RKO Radio pictures—TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS, MY FAVORITE WIFE, IRENE and BILL OF DIVORCEMENT. Our interviewing was carried out during April, before any of them had been released.

The following table shows that our estimates of the audience acceptance value of these pictures have proved to be an accurate prediction of their actual box-office performance.

Picture	Our prediction, April 1940	RKO Classification of Pictures July 25	Box-office Digest Index August 14
MY FAVORITE WIFE	140%	136%	143%
IRENE	105%	95%	108%
TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS	85%	43%	81%
BILL OF DIVORCEMENT	67%	57%	62%

It is possible that a reader who is not conversant with the statistical laws of probability might not appreciate the remarkable correlation between our predictions and subsequent box-office performance. In point of fact the correlation is closer than we can normally expect to achieve.

Never before in the history of motion pictures has it been possible to predict whether a picture would succeed or fail. Today no property need be purchased, and no picture need be photographed, until you know how that picture will stand up at the box-offices of America. The dollars and cents value of this service is limited only by the extent to which you use it.

Princeton, August 30, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXV

COMMUNISM AND HOLLYWOOD

In a nation-wide survey conducted between August 22 and August 27, 1940, Audience Research Institute sought to measure the damage caused by recent allegations of Communism in the motion picture industry.

The survey revealed that these allegations have had a very high "publicity penetration", but the evidence indicates that—up to now—most theatre-goers are not influenced by an actor's political color. It is possible that, if Mr. Dies were able to *prove* his charges, the attitude of the theatre-going public might undergo a change; but even that does not appear as certain.

A representative cross-section of all theatre-goers were asked whether they had noticed the recent newspaper stories about Communism in Hollywood. Two theatre-goers out of every three (66 per cent) said YES, they had noticed them.

When respondents were asked to name any Hollywood stars "who are supposed to be Communists", 52 per cent—a remarkably high proportion—were able to name one or more. The personalities mentioned most frequently were:

	Named by %
James Cagney	37
Fredric March	19
Humphrey Bogart	17
Jean Muir	13
Franchot Tone	6
Lionel Stander	4
Melvyn Douglas	4
George Raft	3
Francis Lederer	3

Respondents were next asked: "Would the fact that a movie star is a Communist make any difference to you if you wanted to see his pictures?"

A substantial majority (68 per cent) admitted that *it would make no difference*. Most of these persons pointed out that they go to the movies in search of entertainment and that the political creed of the players is a matter of indifference to them. Typical were the following comments:

"To be truthful it would not—though I suppose I should say it would."

Housewife, Age 43, husband a bus-driver in N. Y. C.

"I don't care what their political beliefs are."

Receiving clerk, Age 22, in Tampa department store.

"I don't care none about their politics."

Junk-cart man, Age 19, in Chicago.

"He's a movie actor, not a politician. If he stays out of politics, I don't care what he does."

Salesman, Age 19, for steel company, Boston.

"Why would it?—It's the show I want to see."

Boy, Age 16, on fountain curb service in Lincoln, Neb.

On the other hand 29 per cent said that the fact that a movie star is a Communist *would* make a difference to them. Many of these persons replied in terms of money, saying that they were reluctant to contribute to the financial resources of a Communist. A bricklayer in Baltimore put it this way: "They get a lot of money for acting. You never know what they might do with it."

The same sentiment was expressed by the wife of a Johnstown steel engineer, who told our interviewer: "I wouldn't want him to have my money. I wouldn't want to contribute to anybody like that." And a Chicago salesgirl: "I'd be ashamed to contribute to their salaries by seeing their pictures."

Other respondents were righteously indignant, and in some cases the reaction was so jingoistic that its sincerity might be called in question.

A large number of respondents—unwilling to believe anything so unpleasant—dismissed the whole subject as newspaper gossip, untrue, impossible, or "propaganda," while a handful of theatre-goers in the lowest income group expressed sympathy with Communism.

It is remarkable that of the six stars named most frequently as Communists only *one*—Franchot Tone—registered a decline in marquee value between March and August 1940. Cagney, March, Bogart, and Raft registered small gains, and Douglas showed no change. In the case of Tone it is probably prolonged absence from the screen which caused the decline.

Princeton, September 10, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXVI

Notes on the Casting of Lucky Partners

In a series of polls conducted during the last three months, Audience Research Institute gathered detailed advance reactions to LUCKY PARTNERS.

Our study of this picture was designed not so much to measure its audience acceptance value as to place in your hands more specific information on public reaction to the casting. We found that:

- (1) Rogers and Colman are considered an unsuitable partnership.
- (2) A substantial majority of the public would prefer to see Ginger Rogers in a dancing picture.
- (3) LUCKY PARTNERS is not the type of vehicle associated with Mr. Colman.

AN UNSUITABLE PARTNERSHIP •

When it is decided to hire *two* expensive stars for one picture it is important to make sure in advance that the addition of the second star will increase the audience acceptance value of the picture sufficiently to justify the extra investment. In this case, unfortunately, the decision was taken without consulting the ticket-buying public.

We find that a considerable number of theatre-goers disapprove of teaming Rogers with Colman, on account of their disparity in age. "I don't think they are fitted for each other. Ronald Colman is getting up in years and Ginger Rogers is much younger". "There is too much difference in their ages and looks". "Ginger is too young and cute".

In a later survey, Audience Research Institute asked a representative cross-section of theatre-goers this question: "Hollywood is planning a light picture about a couple of witty young New Yorkers. They are wondering what stars should appear in it. Which of these pairs of stars would most make you want to see the picture?"

The pairs, with the percentages voting for them, were as follows:

	%
Cary Grant and Irene Dunne	37
Myrna Loy and William Powell	39
Jean Arthur and James Stewart	26
Ginger Rogers and Ronald Colman	8

The fact that these pairs do not emerge in order of their marquee values confirms our conclusion that the *compatibility* of the two stars is an important factor.

ROGERS PREFERRED IN DANCING PICTURES

A majority of those who objected to the casting of Ginger Rogers did so on the ground that "she should stick to dancing".

In another survey theatre-goers were asked specifically: "What kind of parts do you think of Ginger Rogers as playing?" Although she has played comedy or dramatic parts in all her last four pictures and her next vehicle also comes in this classification, 73% *replied in terms of dancing*.

In still another survey, a representative cross-section of the theatre-going public was asked whether they would rather see Ginger Rogers in a light amusing comedy; a serious play or a musical picture with dancing. The replies were as follows:

	%
Musical picture with dancing	58
Light amusing comedy	35
Serious play	7

These findings are in line with the conclusions of REPORTS I and XI, that the public wants to see Ginger Rogers in another dancing picture. All the evidence on Miss Rogers adds up to the fact that in continuing to avoid dancing pictures she is swimming against the tide of public opinion.

LUCKY PARTNERS UNSUITABLE FOR COLMAN

Objections to Ronald Colman in LUCKY PARTNERS consisted of such reactions as these: "I can't imagine Colman being witty; he's more serious", "He's too much of a gentleman", "He's too dignified".

It is illuminating to study the actual *words* used most frequently by the public in discussing Ronald Colman with our interviewers. They are:

1. Adventure, adventurer, adventurous
2. Soldier, soldier of fortune
3. Serious
4. Gentleman

Obviously LUCKY PARTNERS does not accord with this popular formula for a Colman picture.

We do not imply that a player should never be cast in a part different from those he has been playing in the recent past. But we believe that a radical departure in casting *may* (and in this case does) handicap the immediate audience acceptance value of the picture concerned. And it is probable that this consideration is particularly important in the case of a light comedy.

As in the case of Miss Rogers, it becomes a question of how profitable it can be to take the line of greater resistance.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXVII

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

In a nation-wide survey conducted between September 11 and September 14, 1940, Audience Research Institute tested the audience acceptance value of *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*, using the following synopsis:

"The epic story of the man who organized the famous Revolt in the Desert during the last war. Lawrence was a Military Intelligence Officer of extraordinary daring and endurance. Operating in secret and always disguised as an Arab, he led the nomadic tribesmen in a successful revolt against their Turkish masters."

The star used in this test was Ronald Colman—an English actor whose suitability for the part may be judged from the fact that he is thought of by the theatre-going public as an "adventurer, a soldier of fortune, serious, a gentleman" (See REPORT XXVI).

The results of this poll indicate that *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA* with Colman would reach 115% on the RKO Classification of Pictures.

Inspection of the comments offered by respondents shows that so much has been written about Lawrence, not only in his own *SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM* and the Lowell Thomas biography, but also in newspapers and magazines, that knowledge of his life story has reached a very wide circulation indeed.

Respondents seemed to appreciate the fact that Lawrence is a *modern* hero—not a fusty figure from the school history books. They recognized the action, the color and the excitement of his career.

Obviously cost must be the determining factor in deciding whether or not to produce a picture whose box-office potential does not exceed 115%. Unfortunately we are not in a position to estimate the cost of making *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*. But it must be remembered that Lawrence never worked with more than a mere handful of followers, and that his adventures were always free from pomp and circumstance. It should therefore be possible to produce the picture fairly economically—without investing the large sum of money required for *GUNGA DIN*, for example.

Film rights to the life of Lawrence are understood to belong to Alexander Korda, on whose books the property is said to stand at £30,000. Korda once planned to make the picture with Leslie Howard, but was persuaded by Lawrence himself to postpone the production. Since the outbreak of war the property has again been shelved, this time because the British Government was anxious not to offend the susceptibilities of the Turkish authorities.

We understand that there is a clause in Korda's contract with the Lawrence trustees to the effect that the rights must never be transferred to an American company. Nevertheless we have reason to believe that the purchase could now be negotiated, and that funds blocked in London could be used for the purpose.

Princeton, September 23, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXVIII

THE SWAN FOR RONALD COLMAN

In a nation-wide survey conducted between September 17th and 19th, Audience Research Institute measured the acceptance value of THE SWAN with Ronald Colman. The results of our poll indicate that *unless it is drastically re-written*, this picture would not reach 85 per cent on the RKO Classification.

Even those persons who voted for THE SWAN made it clear, almost without exception, that they were doing so on account of Mr. Colman's presence in the cast, and not from any interest in the story. Said a salesgirl in Leonia: "I don't like the sound of the story, but I do like Ronald Colman".

Lack of interest in THE SWAN can best be explained by reporting some of the actual comments recorded by our interviewers:

"Rather silly".

"I don't like that highbrow kind".

"Too tragic. The end kills that for me".

"Mushy".

"Too romantic".

The romantic character of the story is reflected in the fact that it received almost three times as many votes from women as from men; this has of course been taken into account in arriving at our estimate of the picture's box-office performance.

It is significant that THE SWAN is least weak among persons in the highest income brackets, and this is true to such an extent that it cannot be explained simply in terms of the contour of Mr. Colman's marquee value. It appears that the background of a Ruritanian court is not one which excites the interest of people with only average education.

Less than one per cent recalled having seen THE SWAN in the United Artists or Paramount productions.

During the last six months we have pre-tested the audience acceptance value of Ronald Colman in three different properties. The results of these polls were as follows:

	%
Colman in LAWRENCE OF ARABIA	115
Colman in LUCKY PARTNERS	92
Colman in THE SWAN	80

It happens that you are already in a position to judge the accuracy of one of these predictions: LUCKY PARTNERS stand today at 96% on the RKO Classification. In the face of this evidence we cannot advise RKO Radio to proceed with the purchase of THE SWAN.

Princeton, October 1, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXIX

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE

DIVORCE

In a nation-wide survey conducted between September 5 and September 9, 1940 Audience Research Institute asked a representative cross-section of theatre-goers: "Suppose you just found out your favorite star had got a divorce. Would you stay away from that star's pictures because of that?" Only 4 per cent replied to this question in the affirmative, 96 per cent saying that the star's divorce would make no difference.

Typical were the following comments:

"Heck, what do I care about a person's private problems".

"It wouldn't bother me any".

"What's that got to do with acting ability?"

"Divorce is practically a custom now".

"It doesn't mean anything, especially out there".

"That's no crime nowadays certainly".

"I've been divorced myself—it doesn't mean anything".

"If we did that we'd never go to the movies".

A few persons admitted that divorce would actually make their favorite stars "more interesting".

In order to make the question specific, we asked respondents whether they had read about Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh getting divorces. 58 per cent had read about it, 42 per cent had not.

Those who knew about the Leigh-Olivier divorces were asked: "Would that make any difference to you if you wanted to see their pictures?" 94 per cent replied that it would make no difference. Said a typical theatre-goer: "They're *fine actors* even though they may be marital failures".

The results of this survey demonstrate that divorce has little or nothing to do with the factors which keep people away from the theatre. At the same time, although it does not appear to have any *direct* effect on box-office, news of frequent and sensational divorces still provides ammunition for the pressure groups.

SPORT SHORTS

A member of this Institute recently complained about the subjects selected by Hollywood for sports shorts. She pointed out that although she has never been on a golf course in her life and has no interest whatsoever in that game, she is constantly obliged to sit through six hundred feet of tedious instruction from a golf professional.

This complaint prompted us to measure the extent of public interest in twenty-four different sports subjects. The results of our poll may be useful to the editors of RKO Pathé Sportscope.

A representative cross-section of theatre-goers were asked this question: "Movie theatres often show short pictures dealing with sports. I wonder if you'd mind telling me which of these sports would interest you as subjects for a movie short?" The voting was as follows:

1. Football
2. Swimming
3. Ice skating
4. Skiing
5. Baseball
6. Tennis
7. Basketball
8. Horse racing
9. Horseback riding
10. Roller skating
11. Fishing
12. Yachting
13. Hunting
14. Golf
15. Bowling
16. Hockey
17. Track
18. Bicycling
19. Archery
20. Polo
21. Billiards
22. Badminton
23. Handball
24. Lacrosse

As might be expected, there was considerable difference in voting by sex. Swimming, ice skating, skiing, tennis, horseback riding, roller skating, bicycling, archery and badminton were found to interest women more than they interest men. The reverse was found to be true of football, baseball, basketball, fishing, hunting, hockey, track, billiards, handball and lacrosse. In five cases interest was found to be approximately equal among men and women: horse racing, yachting, golf, bowling and polo.

ESTIMATES OF PAST ATTENDANCE

Our predictions are as good as our cross-section is representative of the entire theatre-going public. A good test of the accuracy of our cross-section is provided by a comparison of pictures seen by persons interviewed with the actual box-office ranking of those pictures. We recently made such a test when we asked theatre-goers to tell us which of a list of seven motion pictures they had already seen. Their replies ranked the pictures in this order of box-office performance:

	<i>Actual order as shown by RKO Classification</i>
1. Northwest Passage	1
2. Buck Benny Rides Again	3
3. Ghost Breakers	4
4. Virginia City	2
5. Waterloo Bridge	5
6. Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet	6
7. The Light That Failed	7

In this case the coefficient of correlation between our estimate and actual box-office performance was .89.

Princeton, October 4, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXX

THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER

THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER with Paul Muni as the Devil and Edward Arnold as Daniel Webster would not reach 100 per cent on the RKO Classification of Pictures. This fact is revealed by a nation-wide survey just completed by Audience Research Institute.

The Stephen Vincent Benet property was subjected to a battery of different tests, both with and without cast. The results of all these tests add up to the fact that, far from helping Mr. Muni, THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER would be a waste of his marquee value. In spite of the lavish praise which has been heaped on the story by William Lyon Phelps and other distinguished critics, it lacks interest for the theatre-going public.

The fact of the matter is that THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER is a fantasy, and the public at large does not appreciate fantasies.

The picture is markedly weak with women, with children under eighteen years of age, and with the lower income levels. Such appeal as it does possess is predominantly to persons over thirty-one in the upper income brackets and to that limited segment of the population which likes educational pictures.

This negative audience reaction to THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER prompted the suggestion that we measure the audience acceptance value of Paul Muni in THE MAYO BROTHERS, a property which had emerged very high when tested without cast.

Our poll shows that Muni in THE MAYO BROTHERS would do between 125 and 130 per cent on the RKO Classification. The fact that the casting of Muni in this picture reduced its audience acceptance value suggests that theatre-goers do not easily visualize him in the part.

Questioning revealed that his best remembered rolls are PASTEUR, ZOLA, THE GOOD EARTH and JUAREZ—in that order. It appears that Muni has become typed as a foreigner to such an extent that the public has difficulty in visualizing him in an American part.

Nevertheless, although not a perfect part for Muni, THE MAYO BROTHERS should do better business at the box-office than any RKO picture released this year—with the single exception of MY FAVORITE WIFE. Whether to give the part to Muni or to reserve it for a more suitable star is a matter for RKO to decide.

Mr. Muni has a problem on his hands. His concentration on highbrow and foreign properties has deprived him of marque value among two important segments of the population—the young and the poor. All indications are that if he persists in this policy he will progressively alienate more and more ordinary theatre-goers, to a point where his pictures will become the esoteric taste of a few connoisseurs. The evidence shows that *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER* would be another step in this spiral.

It may well be that Mr. Muni's devotion to his own particular brand of historical portraiture is so fervid that he is prepared to sacrifice the rewards of popular approval. But it is impossible for us to advise RKO Radio to finance this sacrifice.

On the other hand, it may be that Mr. Muni has only to be confronted with a statistical picture of his present marquee value to be convinced of the wisdom of hedging towards properties with a more catholic appeal. And a first step in that direction would undoubtedly be provided by *THE MAYO BROTHERS*.

Princeton, October 5, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

· *Report* xxxi ·

MR. & MRS. SMITH

IN three separate polls, conducted between August 30 and October 5, 1940, Audience Research Institute measured the acceptance value of MR. & MRS. SMITH, with Carole Lombard and Robert Montgomery. The results of these polls indicate that the picture will do something between 105 and 115 per cent on the RKO Classification.

It must be emphasized that our study was based upon the March 16 synopsis of the estimating script.* If Mr. Hitchcock makes any radical departures from that script, our prediction must be withdrawn.

MR. & MRS SMITH appeals much more to women than to men—a fact which may be useful in orientating your advertising. It lacks appeal for men, for persons under eighteen years of age, and for persons in the lower income groups.

In regard to size of community, MR. & MRS. SMITH is the reverse of DREAMING OUT LOUD—its appeal being greatest in urban communities over 500,000.

We have been asked what contribution a director's name can make to the marquee value of a motion picture—apart from his professional contribution to the picture's creation. While it is difficult to measure the exact dollars and cents value of Hitchcock's name on the marquee, we were able to detect that it adds a tangible, if small, cash *plus* to MR. & MRS. SMITH. For that reason we would urge that Hitchcock be given conspicuous billing.

In this connection it is relevant to report the results of another survey in which theatre-goers were asked to identify Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Frank Capra and Lewis Milestone. Both "Producer" and "Director" were counted as correct identification, since the general public does not seem to differentiate between these two functions. Results were as follows:

	<i>Correctly Identified %</i>	<i>Could Name One Or More Pictures %</i>	<i>Pictures Named Most Frequently</i>
Frank Capra	62	27	1. Lost Horizon 2. It Happened One Night 3. Mr. Smith 4. Mr. Deeds 5. You Can't Take It With You
Alfred Hitchcock	22	8	1. Rebecca 2. Foreign Correspondent 3. { 39 Steps Lady Vanishes Jamaica Inn
John Ford	21	2	1. Informer 2. Grapes of Wrath 3. Stagecoach
Lewis Milestone	17	1	1. All Quiet 2. Of Mice & Men

In another survey we tested the two titles—MR. & MRS. SMITH and MR. & MRS. We were unable to detect any significant difference between their pulling power.

Princeton, October 15, 1940.

* THE FOLLOWING SYNOPSSES WERE USED:

[1]

"A light-hearted comedy about a bright young New York lawyer and his pretty wife, whose antics amaze the husband's law partner. Most upsetting is their habit of disappearing for days into a locked room to quarrel. But their troubles really begin when each finds out without the other knowing it that their marriage is illegal. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock."

[2]

"Alfred Hitchcock's gay comedy of a young New York lawyer and his pretty wife, who fight for love and love to fight. When they find their marriage isn't legal, they try to find happiness apart, but discover it's more fun quarreling with each other than living peaceable lives apart."

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXII

KITTY FOYLE

On October 9, 1940 RKO Radio Pictures, Inc. instructed us to find out:

- (1) *How many people have read KITTY FOYLE?*
- (2) *How many know about the picture?*
- (3) *What will the picture gross?*

HOW MANY READ THE BOOK?

Lippincott has sold 140,000 copies of the book. Our studies of book readership show that in this case seven readers per copy would be a fair estimate of the total readership—i.e., taking into account public libraries, rental libraries and borrowing from friends. This would give a total figure of 980,000 persons who have read KITTY FOYLE to date.*

It is interesting to record that KITTY FOYLE, which has disappeared from the lists of best sellers, today stands second among library favorites, being exceeded only by *HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY*. This fact demonstrates that there is no need for RKO to fear that they have missed the bus on KITTY FOYLE. It is evident that public interest in and knowledge of the story is greater today than it was when the book stood high on the list of best sellers six months ago.

In a recent survey we questioned theatre-goers about this book and found that it is essentially a *woman's book*. Approximately five women have read it for every one man who has read it.

Any steps which RKO could take to boost the readership of KITTY FOYLE would be all to the good. We recall that REBECCA was serialized in twenty-six mass circulation newspapers immediately prior to the picture's release. The Grosset & Dunlap reprint edition of KITTY FOYLE will contribute something, but a newspaper syndication would contribute much more.

HOW MANY KNOW ABOUT THE PICTURE?

Twenty-three per cent of all theatre-goers know that KITTY FOYLE is being made as a picture, while eleven per cent know that Ginger Rogers is playing Kitty (as of October 19). Seventy-two per cent of all theatre-goers have never heard of KITTY FOYLE—book or picture.

Less than one-half of one per cent know that Sam Wood is directing the picture. As a matter of fact, 78 per cent have never heard of Mr. Wood.

* In February 1939 the American Institute of Public Opinion (the Gallup Poll) found that 14,000,000 had already read all or part of *GONE WITH THE WIND*.

WHAT WILL THE PICTURE GROSS?

When KITTY FOYLE was subjected to the same tests which had accurately predicted the box-office performances of MY FAVORITE WIFE, LUCKY PARTNERS, VIGIL IN THE NIGHT, BILL OF DIVORCEMENT and other pictures, the results showed that it would not do better than 100 per cent on the RKO Classification of Pictures.†

KITTY FOYLE will be popular with female theatre-goers, but not popular enough to compensate for its marked lack of appeal for male theatre-goers.

The charm of Mr. Morley's book is dependent on a highly personal quality which cannot easily be translated into a factor of great box-office appeal. Stripped of that fugitive intimacy, the property becomes a love story, pure and simple, and as such it lacks appeal not only with men, but with most ticket-buyers under eighteen years of age. In the words of a schoolboy whom we interviewed: "It's all about love. I don't like love."

It is perhaps significant that among the twenty-five top ranking boxoffice successes of the last twelve months, not one was a straight love story without some other dominant factor of high audience interest.

Such appeal as KITTY FOYLE does possess arises chiefly from the fact that it is "a picture of everyday life". Time and again these exact words were used by respondents when discussing the picture favorably with our interviewers. We suggest that these words should be used in the advertisements—"A Picture of Everyday Life". They may not belong to the vocabulary of the copywriter who deals in conventional superlatives and scorns the vernacular of the ordinary ticket-buyer; but they seem to be words which will sell tickets.

For the record, it must be emphasized that the decision to purchase KITTY FOYLE, and the decision to proceed with the production, were made without measuring the property's audience acceptance value.

Princeton, October 29, 1940

† Three separate polls were taken, using three different synopses:

SYNOPSIS I

"Christopher Morley's story of a high spirited Philadelphia stenographer who falls in love with a wealthy young bachelor, and wisecracks her way through heartbreak."

SYNOPSIS II

"Wisecracking, lovable Kitty Foyle steps from best-seller to screen, presenting the joys and problems of the White Collar Girl. Her problem—should she run away with the former husband she loves, though she knows she can never fit into his aristocratic life? Or should she accept security by marrying the young doctor she admires?"

SYNOPSIS III

"The White Collar Girl—the woman of the covered typewriter as described by Christopher Morley in his best-selling novel, 'Kitty Foyle'.

"Kitty needn't have been one if she'd listened to her Irish heart instead of her Scotch wisdom. She could have remained Mrs. Wynnewood Strafford VI of the Philadelphia Straffords.

"Wyn fell for Kitty's flashing blue eyes and Irish black hair the first time he saw her—the day he came to talk to her Pop about cricket. Pop, before his rheumatism got him, had been groundkeeper and coach at one of the best cricket clubs. He could give Wyn valuable information for the centennial book on cricket he was writing, and Kitty typed the manuscript.

"Work done, Wyn discarded his businesslike manner. They went for long rides and talked about 'US'. And when they eloped, Kitty was sure they would be happy. That was before she realized what it meant to be a Strafford.

"The Straffords wanted to give Kitty an education abroad to polish off her rough edges, but Kitty exploded, 'I'll teach YOU all I want, but you can't improve ME'. An annulment seemed the only solution.

"The baby might have made a difference, if Wyn had ever known. When Kitty saw the announcement of Wyn's engagement to a socialite, she kept the secret to herself. Wyn would have insisted on their remarriage.

"Kitty still didn't think she would ever be accepted by a crowd that 'would reckon Ben Franklin was still a boy from 'the wrong side of the tracks'.

"She went to New York and became a White Collar Girl. At their Milkman's Matinee, when the girls drink black coffee (cream and sugar are fattening) and let their hair down, Kitty thinks of Wyn. Is he happy?

"She'll never love anyone so much again, but wouldn't it be better to marry the rising young doctor, Mark Eisen, than be a bachelor girl living on memories?"

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXIII

PUBLIC OPINION AND PAUL MUNI

At the conclusion of three weeks' intensive interviewing on properties for Paul Muni, seven of our most experienced field workers were invited to report their general impressions of public opinion in relation to Mr. Muni—to summarize in their own words the conversations they have been having with farmers and factory workers, housewives and stenographers.

The substance of their reports boils down to this: "Muni's name is generally associated with serious dramatic acting. Unfortunately it happens that at this point in the world's history rather few people want to see anything deep or serious. The current popular demand seems to be overwhelmingly for escapist entertainment. As of today the commodity purveyed by Muni is at a discount.

"Muni is admired by the prosperous and more adult segments of the population as a consummate actor. This admiration, however, is purely intellectual, and does not derive from either of the two basic forces which seem to underlie the popularity of a normal movie star—sexual attraction or the respondent's desire to identify himself with the star. For that reason allegiance to Muni hangs on a somewhat tenuous thread, and is unlikely to operate when any counter-attraction offers."

Further light on the state of public opinion in relation to Muni is shed by an inspection of the reactions obtained when we asked theatre-goers this wide-open question: "What do you think of Paul Muni?" Significant were the following replies:

When I'm in the mood for deep thought, I see him.

Anything he played in would be very educational.

He always plays a part in sort of deep pictures—too deep for me.

He's all right. I guess he's a good actor but to me he's just a little too dead pan.

He should take his make-up off and do something realistic, American and contemporary.

He is good, but I would like to see him act American parts more.

He's very good, but I wouldn't go out of my way to see his pictures—he's too serious.

I like him very much. I think he's a wonderful actor but I don't care so much for the parts he usually takes. I prefer sophisticated comedies.

Ordinary. He is usually heavy. Light musicals is what I most prefer. A-No. 1, nobody better. I think he's a great character actor. He studies his part before he starts acting.

I like his acting very much. I like the way he portrays a character—he puts his whole heart and soul into it—it's real.

Has beautiful portrayals of stern character usually. He has a fine art of acting.

I like him—he's a damn good actor but personally I just prefer lighter vein to my entertainment.

It appears that even Muni's admirers never forget that they are watching an actor at work. His technical virtuosity seems to be so conspicuous that the illusion is sometimes not complete in his pictures.

The results of our third Audit of Marquee Values will not be available until next week; but already we can say that the steep decline in Muni's marquee value between April and July has not been reversed. Whether this is due to his absence from the screen after a box-office failure, or to a growing popular preference for lighter pictures—we do not yet know. Whatever the cause of his decline, it is becoming increasingly plain that Muni's pulling power at the box-office is becoming extremely problematical.

That is why it is so vitally necessary to exercise care and patience in finding a popular vehicle for him. To embark on a Muni picture at this time before making certain of its audience acceptance value would be to incur a more than usually grave risk.

We have already tested fourteen different story ideas for Muni, but with the single exception of *THE MAYO BROTHERS*, not one of them would rate higher than 110 per cent on the RKO Classification, and only one or two would rate higher than 100 per cent. The search continues, with all possible speed, and the instant a positive result is obtained we shall communicate the good news to you by telegraph.

The problem is to find a vehicle which not only offers ample scope for Muni's acting genius, but also possesses sufficient *mass* appeal to recapture the millions who have been frightened off by his recent pictures.

Princeton, October 30, 1940

EXTRACTS FROM IMPRESSIONS REPORTED BY SEVEN INTERVIEWERS

INTERVIEWER A, JOHNSTOWN, PA.

"I find that people of all classes agree that Paul Muni is a great actor. As his acting ability is not often disputed, it is only the type of picture in which he appears that determines what class of people he will attract.

"A lover of fine acting will probably see Paul Muni regardless of what type of picture he plays in. However, the average theater-goer is not appreciative of fine acting alone—the story must have some appeal for him.

"Because of many of his characterizations of older men, some people have come to think of Muni as an old man. He needs to take a romantic lead himself to get that idea out of their minds.

"I cannot say that I have heard any strong spontaneous demand to see Paul Muni in a new picture. From my observations, it seems that the trend of the times has discouraged heavy dramatic acting. Today, people do not often express a desire to see anything deep or tragic—they want something lighter or something with a lot of action. These people have heard and read so much about war and grief day after day that, I believe, the average person is going to the movies now with the sole purpose of being entertained."

INTERVIEWER B, BOSTON

"Most movie-goers I've questioned about Paul Muni seemed to connect him with *The Good Earth*. I haven't had one respondent yet who didn't enjoy that picture. Every one of them has had the highest praise for him in that picture and would try to see a picture with him in it if it was the same type."

INTERVIEWER C, CHICAGO

"Muni, of course, is definitely a 'class' actor and as such does not have a wide, popular appeal in the movie field. He has done nothing worthless, only one trivial film *'Hi, Nellie!'*, yet nothing sensationally popular with the masses of clerks and shopgirls, salesmen, mechanics and others that comprise the greater part of the movie-going public.

"Muni always will be a strong, a great actor. It is not his fault if the public prefers legs and bosoms, profiles and six-footers, beauty and dumbness, to straight, unvarnished first-class *acting*."

INTERVIEWER D, PHILADELPHIA

"The poorer class seem to resent his superior manner but at the same time admit he is a very capable actor. The prosperous class seem to appreciate his talents and also enjoy his pictures.

"I have had people tell me they don't understand him or his pictures are over their heads."

INTERVIEWER E, LA SALLE, ILLINOIS

"I'd say the general public reaction of my community was for a lighter type of show than Muni plays in."

INTERVIEWER F, SAN FRANCISCO

"He has been typed as a subject in intellectual rather than entertaining pictures; too many long, dull courtroom scenes and too many foreign elevated moral situations have made his pictures 'worth while' but boring to the respondents."

INTERVIEWER G, WASHINGTON, IOWA

"I really think those who know him, think he's a wonderful actor. But even many of his great admirers aren't choosing the type of picture he plays, right now. They are hunting lighter fare as relief."

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXIV

BELIEVE-IT-OR-NOT EQUATIONS

Our Third Audit of Marquee Values, October 1940, reveals some illuminating facts. For instance, the following pairs are found to be equivalent in marquee value at this time:

James Cagney	—	Pat O'Brien
Ginger Rogers	—	Loretta Young
Ronald Colman	—	Jack Benny
Carole Lombard	—	Ann Sheridan
Charles Laughton	—	Robert Taylor
Joan Crawford	—	Olivia de Havilland
Greta Garbo	—	Joan Blondell
Shirley Temple	—	Jane Withers
Merle Oberon	—	Anne Shirley
Marlene Dietrich	—	Anna Neagle

The personalities paired above are equal in their ability to sell tickets.

But there are some amazing discrepancies in the remuneration they receive for their services.

Princeton, November 28, 1940.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXV

THE INGREDIENTS OF MARQUEE VALUE

A review of the first three Audits of 1940 reveals some interesting facts about the composition of personality followings. Most stars do not gain support equally from all groups of movie-goers, but appeal particularly to certain segments of the population. Naturally, the variation is greater in the case of some stars than in others. But the star who is equally popular with all age groups, income levels, and in all parts of the country, is the rare exception rather than the rule.

For example, let us analyze the standing of the three leading male stars,—Tracy, Gable and Rooney. The popularity of Spencer Tracy and Clark Gable is remarkably consistent. Both are equally popular among different age groups and income levels. But even Tracy is distinctly more popular with men than with women.

The only variation in Gable's following, on the other hand, is that it is greatest in the South.

Mickey Rooney's popularity is strongly influenced by age, sex, and income, and he attains his greatest popularity among young boys. But his following shows almost no variation as between different sections of the country—presumably because boys make up about the same share of the population in all regions.

Most stars appeal more strongly to one sex than the other. But among the first twenty players, there are a few who draw support almost equally from both sexes. They include Clark Gable, James Stewart, Myrna Loy, Ginger Rogers, and Ronald Colman. This situation is understandable when one considers the personalities of these players, and the vehicles in which they appear.

What are the factors which determine the pattern of an actor's following? Among others, these three stand out:

- (1) Self-identification—the extent to which you can identify yourself with the actor
- (2) Sex-appeal
- (3) Acting ability

We cannot evaluate the relative importance of these various factors, nor do we believe that they always operate in the same way. In some cases, sex-appeal seems to be all-important, and self-identification makes little difference; whereas in others self-identification seems to be the dominant factor. Some stars appear to be affected by all three.

Nor do we pretend to have isolated all the ingredients of marquee value in this first tentative analysis. Others may appear as we continue our investigations.

But we do believe that these three factors provide a useful check-list, which may help to understand and interpret the nature of star popularity.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION

The whole problem of star popularity is of course bound up with vehicle, and that inter-relationship is very important here.

What do we mean by "self-identification"? We mean the tendency of theater-goers to project themselves into the situation portrayed on the screen, to imagine themselves in the place of the star, or possibly subconsciously to pretend they are the star.

Obviously, it is easier to imagine yourself in Mickey Rooney's shoes if you are a boy of seventeen than if you are a middle-aged housewife. That is why Rooney is overwhelmingly more popular with boys of his own age than with any other group of the population.

Many other instances point to this trick of self-identification. For example, Judy Garland, Deanna Durbin, and Linda Darnell are most popular with girls of their own age.

And Joan Crawford, Miriam Hopkins, Irene Dunne, Claudette Colbert, and Norma Shearer are most popular with women over thirty.

Certain differences in taste between economic groups also probably reflect self-identification. The lower income groups show a marked preference for Ginger Rogers, Pat O'Brien, James Cagney, Dorothy Lamour, George Raft, Alice Faye, and Eleanor Powell. On the other hand, these same people are indifferent to the queenly Norma Shearer, Katharine Hepburn, Franchot Tone, and Robert Montgomery of the Racquet and Tennis Club.

Of course, instances can be found in which this principle apparently does not operate. For example, Shirley Temple's greatest following among persons over twelve is among women over thirty. In such cases either some other factor is more important, or the factor of self-identification operates in a somewhat different manner. It is conceivable, for example, that women over thirty identify Shirley Temple with their own children.

SEX-APPEAL

It is an interesting fact that sex-appeal seems to operate more with women than with men. Thus while nine of the first fourteen stars selected by women are male stars, none of the first fourteen selected by men are female stars.

The great majority of actresses are more popular with female than with male theater-goers. But there are a few notable exceptions to this rule: Hedy Lamarr, Alice Faye, Dorothy Lamour, Ann Sheridan, Joan Bennett and Marlene Dietrich.

It's an interesting side-light that all these stars are commonly described as glamour girls.

ACTING ABILITY

We cannot contribute much to an appraisal of acting ability, since all major stars must possess a certain minimum level of acting competence before they become stars; and since acting ability is so largely a matter of personal judgment.

However, there are a few successful stars whose popularity seems to derive chiefly from *outstanding* acting ability. The most conspicuous examples are Paul Muni and Charles Laughton.

Princeton, December 3, 1940.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXVI

THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED

On April 23, 1940 we reported that the audience acceptance value of **THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED** was slightly lower than that of **VIGIL IN THE NIGHT**. **VIGIL** had done 95 per cent on the RKO Classification, but had enjoyed the advantage of playing with the Louis-Godoy fight picture; it therefore appeared that **THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED** would do less than 90 per cent.

On August 20 we reported the results of a second survey, in which **THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED** had received the same vote as before. This time we wrote that, even allowing for Mr. Kanin's genius, we should be "surprised if the picture ever reached 105 per cent".

On October 10 the picture opened at the Music Hall. The next morning Kate Cameron awarded it four stars, and almost all the other reviewers tossed their hats in the air. The trade press was equally enthusiastic.

Today, however, we have received the RKO Classification for the period ending November 23, and we find that our prediction was accurate: **THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED** stands at 82 per cent.

The following table shows the correlation between our predictions and actual box-office results for this and seven other pictures:

	<i>Our Prediction</i>	<i>Box-Office Performance Reported by RKO Theatre Department</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
BOOM TOWN	180 ⁺	190
MY FAVORITE WIFE	140	136
IRENE	105	95
LUCKY PARTNERS	92	93
THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED	90 ⁻	82
VIGIL IN THE NIGHT	90 ⁻	95*
TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS	85	43
BILL OF DIVORCEMENT	67	57

The standard of accuracy revealed in this table provides dramatic support for our observation that the most accurate judges of box-office values are the theatre-going public themselves.

* With Louis-Godoy fight.

Ten major productions are now on the stocks at RKO, and in every case the commitment was made without first subjecting the idea to a poll. These ten productions are:

*MR. & MRS. SMITH—Lombard and Montgomery
*KITTY FOYLE—Rogers
CITIZEN KANE—Welles
THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES—Arthur
TOM, DICK & HARRY—Rogers
BLOOD WILL TELL
BEFORE THE FACT—Cary Grant
MR. PINKIE—Laughton
PALM BEACH LIMITED—Colman
MAYERLING—Boyer

It is possible that among these ten pictures there will be some smash hits, but the law of averages makes it inevitable that there will be one or more box-office failures. We are confident that the theatre-going public—if they had been consulted—would have identified most if not all of those failures and so saved RKO the investments involved in them.

The same public was right about LUCKY PARTNERS and THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED.

* This picture was submitted to us for a poll *after* it had been shot.

Princeton, December 10, 1940.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXVII

LITTLE MEN II

On April 25 we reported a high audience acceptance value for the story of *LITTLE MEN*. We emphasized, however, that this finding had no reference to the proposed cast or to the Towne and Baker treatment.

In a subsequent survey conducted between November 23 and November 30, we measured the audience acceptance value of the picture as produced by Towne and Baker, with their cast. The results of this poll indicate that *LITTLE MEN* will never reach 80 per cent on the RKO Classification. In fact 65 per cent appears to be a fair estimate of its probable box-office performance.

Why has this picture, which demonstrated a high audience appeal in our first survey, failed to fulfill its original promise?

In the first report on this property we recorded the fact that 74 per cent of those who selected *LITTLE MEN* did so because they had read the book, or because they were Louisa M. Alcott fans. In other words, the audience appeal of *LITTLE MEN* derived in large measure from the affection with which its many readers remember it.

The implication of this finding was that the picture must adhere faithfully to the original book, if it were to capitalize fully on its considerable ready-made market. Perhaps Towne and Baker underestimated the extent of the book's following, because they abandoned this asset in favor of a more "popular" treatment.

The reactions of theatre-goers to this revision were not enthusiastic:

They'll ruin the book.

I would like to see the book come to life.

The movie would spoil the book.

I'd like it if it weren't too streamlined—if it followed the book.

It doesn't sound like an improvement on the book.

I read the book and I want to know if it's like it.

If it sticks to the book, it would make a swell movie.

The other factor responsible for the shrinkage in the picture's audience acceptance value was found to be the cast. The cast does not, of course, endow the picture with any considerable marquee, but the same thing might be said of many successful low-budget pictures. In this case, however, we have detected an unusually vocal *negative* reaction to the selection of Jack Oakie and Kay Francis:

Not worth seeing with that cast.

That doesn't sound like who I think could do Little Men.

If Jack Oakie wasn't in that, I might see it.

Not with Jack Oakie.

Curiosity would make me see that, although I don't like the players.

I can't imagine Kay Francis and Oakie in it, with his big overcoat.

This report is being written after the picture has opened, but our poll was conducted *before it had been exposed to the public*. It is possible that our prediction of 65 per cent will be proved an under-estimate: The Hollywood Reporter eulogizes the picture as "one of the big sleepers of the year". We can only hope they are right.

Princeton, December 11, 1940.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXVIII

PARACHUTE INVASION

Audience Research Institute has contracted to furnish RKO Radio Pictures with an unspecified number of certified story ideas. The ideas so far contributed under this heading have been ARMY SURGEON, THE MAYO BROTHERS, LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY, and SUE BARTON.

It may interest you to know that altogether we have tested 163 of our own story ideas. Of these, only five turned out to be strong enough to merit serious consideration by RKO.

In order to find those 163 story ideas we combed the best-seller lists since 1890; we studied the net readership of all magazine stories checked by Dr. Gallup for Young & Rubicam; we scrutinized the published lists of library favorites and conducted our own polls among librarians; we canvassed representative cross-sections of the theatre-going public for suggestions; we searched the advance editions of publishers' lists; and we consulted our own imaginations. The end result of all this activity was that we culled 163 ideas which *seemed to us* to be excellent. But only five of them survived the ordeal of the Poll.

This week we can report a positive audience reaction to a sixth idea: PARACHUTE INVASION. This story was suggested by the trade press announcement that RKO would make a program picture about the new U. S. Parachute Squadron, and also by the news that two authors—Hillier and Cox—had tried to sell Paramount a story called "Invasion".

Our story was synopsisized as follows:

"PARACHUTE INVASION"

Thrills and adventure training with the U. S. Parachutists, the Army's new suicide squadron. What happens in a dress-rehearsal when they float down on an unsuspecting Connecticut city. How they tie up traffic, cut off telephones and electricity, and take over the radio station to broadcast invasion reports to the bewilderment of the hysterical citizens.

The first step was, as usual, to test the value of the story without reference to cast. PARACHUTE INVASION was therefore entered in a trial heat with four other story ideas: GREENMANTLE, MOBY DICK, RACKETEERS IN THE REICH, and MARRIAGE MEDDLERS. It defeated them all by a comfortable margin, receiving almost twice as many votes as the much-touted GREENMANTLE.

This preliminary poll indicated that PARACHUTE INVASION *probably* had a high audience acceptance value, but to prove the point it was next necessary to test it against one of our standard sets of hypothetical controls.

For this second test we decided to cast the picture with Orson Welles, in accordance with a suggestion offered by one of the theatre-goers we had interviewed. In so doing we were placing the picture at a considerable disadvantage, since Welles does not rank among the first hundred players.

In spite of this lack of marquee strength, PARACHUTE INVASION emerged with a box-office rating of 115 per cent—thirty points higher than any picture previously tested with Orson Welles.* That any picture could emerge so high without benefit of a major marquee name is further proof that the story must possess exceptionally strong audience appeal.

Analysis of the comments recorded by our interviewers reveals that the appeal of PARACHUTE INVASION derives from six major factors:

1. Perennial public interest in the U. S. Army.
2. Life in the Army has become an imminent reality to many families.
3. Growing public interest in aviation.
4. The idea of parachute troops is *topical*.
5. A large section of the public welcome an opportunity to see what war would be like if it happened to overtake their own country:

It shows the war close to home.

I'd like to see AMERICAN reactions to something like that.

I like that because it's in the U. S.

I'd be interested to see what this country could do in a case like that.

6. PARACHUTE INVASION cashes in on the fact that public curiosity in Welles is chiefly orientated in the direction of his Mars broadcast.

We would urge RKO to give very careful consideration to the feasibility of producing PARACHUTE INVASION in the form outlined in our synopsis. The factor of cost is not one upon which we are qualified to comment, but our recent inspection of your department of special effects suggests that the cost need not be prohibitive.

Perhaps the picture would be a hot potato from the viewpoint of local censorship, but it has yet to be proved that such censorship injures a picture at the box-office.

If there are factors which render it impossible for Orson Welles to make the picture, we suggest returning it to us for tests with alternative casts. It is to be expected that a star selected from among the first fifty would substantially increase its box-office value.

*Properties previously tested with Welles were INVASION FROM MARS, CYRANO DE BERGERAC, HEART OF DARKNESS and SMILER WITH A KNIFE. See REPORTS XII and XIV.

Princeton, December 12, 1940.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XXXIX

HAROLD LLOYD

On November 28 you telegraphed instructions to measure the audience acceptance value of Harold Lloyd. In so doing you gave us one of the most difficult assignments we have yet attempted.

The marquee value of a player who has been off the screen for a long time is an intangible which is as difficult to measure as it is to define. We can measure the extent of public interest in Harold Lloyd *as of today*, but we cannot predict how much this interest will be increased by the publicity attendant upon a new picture. It would depend, to a far greater extent than in the case of a current star, on the quantity and quality of that publicity.

In spite of the difficulties of the problem, we have been able to obtain certain information which should be useful in guiding your policy in regard to Mr. Lloyd.

- (1) His recognition value is high. More than 80 per cent of theatre-goers are able to identify him correctly. This is a substantially higher proportion than in the case of many "new" and current players. Maureen O'Hara, for example, was identified by only 58 per cent (April 25) and William Gargan by only 34 per cent (October 26). Incidentally, far more persons identified Lloyd as an actor, than named him as a producer.
- (2) As of today, Harold Lloyd's marquee value is not great. He ranks approximately one hundred and third on our Audit.* However, the significance of this fact should not be exaggerated, having regard to the fact that in December 1939 Charlie Chaplin stood sixty-seventh on our Audit—before the *DICTATOR* publicity had hit its stride.

As a further measurement of Lloyd's marquee strength, we tested a hypothetical comedy for audience acceptance value first with Henry Fonda, and then, in a separate poll, with Harold Lloyd. With Fonda the picture emerged at 83 per cent. With Lloyd the picture emerged at 67 per cent.

This finding in no sense represents a prediction. But it again demonstrates that Lloyd's marquee value is low as of today, inasmuch as the picture emerged considerably lower with Lloyd than with Fonda—who stands fortieth on the current Audit.

*Although Lloyd is not included in our Audit, we were able to add his name to our roster for a single poll. This one study was not sufficient to be conclusive, but it is probable that he is not lower than a hundred and tenth, and certainly not higher than ninetieth.

Harold Lloyd's marquee value is particularly low with children, many of whom have never seen him on the screen. But this disadvantage is partially offset by the fact that Lloyd's type of comedy was found to be more popular with children than with any other segment of the population.

- (3) We cannot yet say what *type* of vehicle starring Lloyd would start with greatest audience acceptance value. But in this connection, certain facts are pertinent:

We have accumulated a great deal of evidence which suggests that the most popular type of picture is the broad classification which we describe to theatre-goers as "light-hearted comedy which makes you laugh a lot." Measured by the same procedure, slapstick comedy emerges as one of the least popular, and furthermore, as a type which many persons actively dislike.

Yet when we questioned theatre-goers as to which of several types of vehicle *starring Lloyd* they would most enjoy seeing, "light-hearted comedy" and "slapstick comedy" received the same vote, tying for first place.

The problem presented by this situation is: Would it be better to star Lloyd in the type of picture having the widest audience acceptance value, although it is not the type with which he is most commonly identified; or would it be better to star him in the type of picture which made him famous, even though that type is now inherently less popular? At least a partial answer to that question would be provided by testing the audience acceptance value of specific vehicles of each type, both starring Lloyd.

The facts reported above point to the conclusion that, in formulating a policy concerning Mr. Lloyd, he should be regarded more or less as a new star. Thus, as in the case of most new stars, any but a *low budget* picture starring Harold Lloyd would be highly speculative. It *might* pay big dividends, but we have been unable to obtain any positive indication that it would do so.

If RKO should decide to sponsor a new Harold Lloyd picture, there are two precautions which would minimize the risk:

- A. Ear-mark an abnormally large proportion of the total investment for publicity and advertising, in an attempt to emulate Chaplin's success in reviving his own marquee value before the release of *THE GREAT DICTATOR*.
- B. Insist on a story which is high in audience acceptance value, and one which lends itself naturally to pre-release publicity. *MY FAVORITE SPY* may be adequate in this respect, but if Bob Hope, Kay Kyser, and half the other studios in Hollywood are also making pictures about the draft, it is to be questioned whether another of the same kind will make good publicity copy.

Princeton, December 16, 1940

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XL

TRAGEDY AT MAYERLING

A study of the reaction of theatre-goers to *TRAGEDY AT MAYERLING*,* with Joan Fontaine and Charles Boyer, reveals a limited audience acceptance value for this picture. Results indicate that *MAYERLING* would do between 85 and 90 per cent on the RKO Classification.

The study of *MAYERLING* employed the same basic test procedure which had accurately predicted the box-office performances of *LUCKY PARTNERS*, *THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED*, *BOOM TOWN*, *MY FAVORITE WIFE*, and other pictures.

Analysis of the results shows that the picture is weakest among young people, the lower income groups, and among men. Conversely, its appeal is greatest among older persons, the prosperous, and women. But even in those segments of the population where it is strongest, the audience acceptance value is only average.

The somewhat unfavorable reaction of the public towards *MAYERLING* is probably due to two main factors:

- (1) It has been our observation that with very few exceptions the only historical-costume pictures which have succeeded at the box-office in recent years were either strong action pictures, or best-sellers, or both. *MAYERLING* is a historical-costume picture but is neither a best-seller nor an action picture.
- (2) We received considerable adverse comment on the tragic element in *MAYERLING*. Such scattered evidence as we have been able to assemble suggests that, other things being equal, a happy picture is likely to have a wider appeal than a picture which is unhappy. Of course there will always be exceptions, but in general the great mass of ordinary theatre-goers tend to avoid depressing pictures. This is perhaps truer today than at any time in recent years; as one respondent put it:

"I want to be entertained when I go to the movies."

A picture which would gross between 85 and 90 per cent could show a profit if produced at sufficiently moderate cost. We understand, however, that in the case of *MAYERLING* the cost involved would inevitably be large.

* Charles Boyer & Joan Fontaine

in

TRAGEDY AT MAYERLING

In the artificial court life of old Vienna, Prince Rudolph feels misunderstood and lonely—until he meets beautiful unsophisticated Marie. The Emperor threatens to stop their love affair, but Rudolph prefers death to ruling a kingdom without the woman he loves. After twenty-four last blissful hours together, they die in a suicide pact.

Princeton, December 30, 1940.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLI

PENNSYLVANIA

In a special survey conducted between November 15 and November 20, 1940, Audience Research Institute measured the opinion of Pennsylvania theatre-goers in regard to two issues which have been keenly debated in that state: Sunday movies and the banning of RAMPARTS by the State Board of Censors.

A representative cross-section of theatre-goers throughout the State were asked this question: "Do you approve or disapprove of having the movie theatres open on Sunday in your community?"

	%
Approve Sunday movies	82
Disapprove Sunday movies	18

These figures indicate that the Lord's Day Alliance, which is fighting to drive Sunday films out of the State, represents only a vocal minority of public opinion in Pennsylvania. At the same time it must be remembered that our poll was confined to "theatre-goers"—i.e. persons who go to the movies at least once a month. It is possible that a majority of those persons who stay away from the movies would vote *against* Sunday movies.*

In the same survey theatre-goers were asked whether they approved or disapproved of the action taken by the State Board of Censors in banning THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH:

	%
Approve banning	13
Disapprove banning	87

In a subsequent question theatre-goers were asked: "In general do you think that the State Board of Censors is too strict or not strict enough in deciding which pictures should be shown in Pennsylvania?"

	%
Too strict	43
Not strict enough	8
About right	49

Inspection of the comments recorded by our interviewers shows that the majority of Pennsylvania theatre-goers approve the censorship of pictures which are *morally* objectionable, but disapprove the censorship of pictures which deal with controversial issues or unpalatable facts.

*The competence of "abstainers" to vote on these issues must always be a matter of debate. Should atheists be permitted to vote on legislation affecting the churches? Conversely should voting on legislation affecting narcotics be confined to dope-addicts? It is a question with two sides.

Princeton, January 6, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLII

MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE

On December 23, 1940, you instructed us to measure the audience acceptance value of MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE (alias PALM BEACH LIMITED) with Ronald Colman cast as Anthony Mason. Our synopsis* was based on the Budget Script dated December 14 with changes up to December 21.

The results of our tests show that the picture is low in audience acceptance value; in fact it would be unlikely to exceed 85 per cent on the RKO Classification of Pictures. In arriving at this figure we have employed the procedure which accurately predicted the box-office performances of LUCKY PARTNERS, THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED, BOOM TOWN, MY FAVORITE WIFE and other pictures.

MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE is markedly weak among males and among persons under eighteen years of age. While less weak in other segments of the population, it is nowhere very strong.

Examination of the comments recorded by our interviewers shows that one explanation for the disappointing performance of this picture concerns the casting of Ronald Colman in a light comedy role. Theatre-goers associate Colman with serious or adventurous parts, and seem unable to accept him in a comedy:

"I like Colman best in serious roles like LOST HORIZON."

"Colman isn't the type for comedy."

"It sounds more like Dunne and Grant."

"Well, to be truthful I can't picture Colman in light comedy."

"Ronald Colman is rather a dramatic actor instead of comedy."

"I think it would be serious with Colman."

"I don't think Colman is really a comedian."

It will be remembered that in a special study conducted in advance of the release of LUCKY PARTNERS, we discovered a similar attitude among the theatre-going public, (See Report XXVI); apparently LUCKY PARTNERS has not succeeded in altering public opinion in this respect.

*MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE

RONALD COLMAN, VIRGINIA BRUCE

"Fast-paced modern comedy about a long-suffering publisher whose flighty wife imagines herself in love with almost every man she meets. When he learns she's planning to run away with a handsome Palm Beach sculptor—he's so helpful with the elopement plans that his wife can't bear to leave him."

A direct question produced further evidence on this point. Our interviewers asked: "Would you rather see Ronald Colman in light, romantic comedies like LUCKY PARTNERS and MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE, or do you prefer to see him in other types of movies?"

	%
No Preference	16
Light Comedies	24
Other Types	60

When asked in *what* other types of movies they preferred to see Colman, a majority of respondents replied in terms of "serious" and "adventure", and the specific picture referred to most frequently was LOST HORIZON.

In the case of MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE it is worth recording that we also received a few scattered comments to the effect that Colman is too old for such a romantic role: *"I like the story but not Grandpa Colman."*

There is evidence to suggest that the basic situation in the plot of MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE is unattractive and therefore unfunny in the eyes of a large number of ticket-buyers. The idea of a married woman repeatedly falling for other men is not considered a matter for joking. We had previously encountered this unsympathetic reaction to the same element in TOO MANY HUSBANDS. Theatre-goers seem to like wives to stay in love with their husbands, as Myrna Loy always stays in love with Mr. Powell.

"No wife should imagine herself in love with every man she meets—that's not quite fair."

"She's very fickle and no one would respect a girl like that."

"I like them to stay with one fellow."

"I don't like it where she plans running away and leaving the husband."

"I don't go much for that flighty wife stuff."

"I just can't imagine Colman helping his wife run away with some other fellow."

Princeton, January 10, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLIII

UNEXPECTED UNCLE and MR. PINKIE

We have just completed tests of the audience acceptance value of two pictures starring Charles Laughton: UNEXPECTED UNCLE and MR. PINKIE. Both pictures were tested by our standard procedure, and under similar conditions, so that it is possible to compare the two.

Neither picture looks very promising on the basis of these tests.

While UNEXPECTED UNCLE emerges as the stronger of the two, its present audience acceptance value indicates a box-office performance of only 75 per cent on the RKO classification.* Obviously a high budget production would not be profitable on that basis; whether or not an expectancy of 75 per cent is sufficient to warrant a low budget picture is a question outside our realm.

The audience acceptance value of MR. PINKIE is even lower, and is, in fact, one of the lowest we have tested. Major objections to the picture, as reflected by the comments, center about the fact that the story is "too far-fetched and unreal," and "too foreign". One theatre-goer summarized this point of view by saying: *"It's so unreal. This English lord business and all that, I don't like it. I'd rather have just an American story"*.

A considerable number of persons commented unfavorably on the title MR. PINKIE. Several persons even said that judging by the title they would avoid the picture, but that the description sounded good. For that reason, if the picture is to be made, we recommend testing alternative titles.

Both UNEXPECTED UNCLE and MR. PINKIE were tested with and without cast, and both emerged relatively stronger *without* cast, on the basis of the story alone. Part of the explanation seems to be that people now have difficulty visualizing Laughton in a comedy role. This does not necessarily mean that they would dislike him in a comedy role if they saw him in one, but it does indicate that Laughton's name on a marquee suggests a different type of picture. It is evident that a majority of American theatre-goers today think of Laughton in terms of his more sinister roles—Tony Patucci, the Hunchback, Pengallon, Captain Bly or Mr. Barrett, while those who associate him with his more amiable roles—such as Ruggles or the Beachcomber—are in the minority. So far as the majority are concerned, casting Laughton as Pinkie or the Unexpected Uncle is almost tantamount to casting Karloff as Captain January.

*As in all our tests, the "audience acceptance value" reflects only the inherent appeal of the story, and the cast, without reference to abnormal direction or abnormal publicity.

We plan to test MR. PINKIE once again, altering the synopsis to emphasize the fact that the central part is a character role rather than comedy. It is relevant to record the fact that we accurately predicted the box-office performance of THE BEACHCOMBER in a test conducted back in February 1939.

Princeton, February 3, 1941

UNEXPECTED UNCLE

CHARLES LAUGHTON, MAUREEN O'HARA

A screwball comedy by the author of MY MAN GODFREY. A distinguished looking trailer tourist—who earns his living by trick horse-shoe pitching—poses as the wealthy uncle of a poor but pretty Palm Beach sales-clerk. Carrying on the bluff, he guides her through a hectic romance with a millionaire playboy.

MR. PINKIE

CHARLES LAUGHTON, LUCILLE BALL, ELSA LANCHESTER

A rollicking Cinderella comedy about a good-natured English bartender from a sleepy West Indies Island, who stands Hollywood on its ear. How he poses as an English Lord, transforms a Brooklyn dancer into a movie star and changes a prim governess into a romantic vagabond willing to share his lazy island life.

9

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLIV

WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE

Four separate nationwide surveys have been used to measure the audience acceptance value of Bartlett Cormack's *WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE*. It has been tested with two different synopses, with cast and without cast.

When tested without cast *WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE* emerged very low. There was little vocal criticism of any particular element in the story—simply a general lack of interest. It is therefore difficult to diagnose the causes of this apathy—one can do little more than provide an informed guess.

The first fact to report is that the subject of horse racing, of itself, interests the theatre-going public somewhat less than it seems to interest the motion picture community in Hollywood. When theatre-goers were asked whether they followed the news on baseball, football, horse racing and tennis, results were as follows:

	%
Football	33
Baseball	24
Tennis	9
Horse racing	8

It was found that only eight per cent were able to name the horse which won the Kentucky Derby in 1940.

In a local survey conducted in Philadelphia, a cross-section of persons with the incomes of \$35 a week or more were cross-examined as to the extent of their interest in horse racing. It was found that 83 per cent had never attended any race-track, or go less than once a year.

We do not mean to imply that a race-track background must always defeat a picture—far from it. But the facts suggest that this subject is certainly no magic ingredient, no guarantee of audience appeal; and inspection of the box office performance of previous race-track pictures confirms this conclusion:

		RKO Theatres %	Box Office Digest * %
MARYLAND <i>In technicolor</i>	Brenda Joyce John Payne	71	111
SPORTING BLOOD	Robert Young Maureen O'Sullivan	Second Feature	74
LADY'S FROM KENTUCKY	George Raft Ellen Drew	Second Feature	77
KING OF THE TURF	Adolphé Menjou D. Costello	Second Feature	70
KENTUCKY <i>In technicolor</i>	Loretta Young Richard Greene	116	138
STABLEMATES	Wallace Beery Mickey Rooney	120	134
SARATOGA	Clark Gable Jean Harlow		168

Thanks to the contribution of Jean Harlow and Clark Gable, the average box-office performance of these seven race-track pictures was 110 per cent on the Box Office Digest index—equivalent to approximately 95 per cent on the RKO Theatre Department Classification. In addition, there have been innumerable program pictures with race-track backgrounds, including RKO's own *RACING LADY* and *THE DAY THE BOOKIES WEPT*.

The above facts go a long way towards explaining why *WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE* emerged so low when tested without cast. In spite of the romantic and comedy elements in the story, its point of difference from other romantic comedies is its horse racing background, and its appeal seems to be limited by the extent of interest in horse racing: "*This is just one of those damned horse racing pictures.*"

The other reason for the story's disappointing performance is that theatre-goers seem to regard the whole set-up as trite. "*This has been shown over and over again—I've seen a million of these.*"

It might be argued that our synopses fail to convey the "different" qualities of Mr. Cormack's story. That criticism is no doubt valid. But it is irrelevant—for the following reason: time and again we have found that the efforts of a screen-writer to give a new twist to a trite subject are lost on the theatre-going public. Theatre-goers have a disconcerting habit of reducing every picture to its basic elements and deciding *pro* or *con* accordingly.

*Not always reliable, but in many cases the only available yard-stick.

If you accost men and women on their way into theatres and question them on the factors which decided them to select that particular picture, you will be surprised to find how crudely they have appraised the picture of their choice. Few persons on the way to see WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE would know even as much as our synopses convey. In this connection it is significant that the results obtained with Synopsis I were the same as the results obtained with Synopsis II.

We come now to the audience acceptance value of WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE when tested with George Raft. On the basis of our poll, it appears that the picture would start with an expectancy of only 70 per cent on the RKO Theatre Department Classification.

At first we were surprised to find any picture with George Raft emerging so low, having regard to his marquee value (forty-fourth in November 1940). But reference to Raft's age-sex and economic charts in the First and Second Audits suggests an explanation: his index with males is 68, while his index with females is only 25. His greatest popularity lies amongst boys under eighteen, and he is twice as popular in the lowest income group as in the highest income group.

These facts suggest that Raft needs stories which appeal to men, boys and the lower income levels—his market. Does WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE fulfil these requirements?

It does not. The story is romance from start to finish, and if there is one thing which men and boys do not appreciate on the screen, it is romance. It is also a story about people whose way of life is entirely foreign to the experience of Raft's proletarian admirers. They could easily project themselves into the adventures of the truck drivers of THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT; but characters who cross the continent in Pullman drawing-rooms are foreign to them.

We find WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE with George Raft appealing equally to men and women, rich and poor, where a Raft picture would normally appeal most to men, to boys and to the poor. The result is that it does not appeal strongly to *any* group.

There is one further reason why George Raft seems to be unacceptable in this vehicle—a reason which is summed up in the following comments:

"He has been too definitely typed as a bad man."

"I can't imagine Raft playing in anything like that."

"Raft is always a tough guy."

"He is always a gangster."

"I can't stand George Raft—too slick and like a wop."

"George Raft is too slimy."

We are well aware that this finding seems to be another argument for type casting. It is even conceivable that we might have reported the same reaction to an advance test of Gable in *IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT*. We can report only what we find. Experienced producers may be prepared to discount such public resistance to innovation, as in the case of casting Colman in modern comedies. It is our job to see that those responsible for such decisions are made fully aware of such resistance. That is where our fact-finding responsibility ends and their judgment begins.

Princeton, February 12, 1941

SYNOPSIS I

"He is a moody, bitter young man. She is pretty and vital. They meet on the train between Chicago and Los Angeles. He is going out to race his own horse in the \$50,000 Gold Cup—she is going out to marry a dull stuffy business man. What happens when they arrive together at the race-track."

SYNOPSIS II

"A different horse racing picture—the horse loses. But love wins. A daffy comedy about a pretty girl who disobeys Mama for the first time in her life and marries a moody young owner-trainer of a race horse, instead of the stuffed shirt Mama approves of. How her mother and jilted fiance try to break up the marriage."

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLV

THE BLIND STALLION

In a series of nationwide surveys Audience Research Institute has tested the acceptance value of THE BLIND STALLION (alias BLOOD WILL TELL), with Pat O'Brien and Loretta Young. Results indicate that the picture would start with a box-office expectancy in the neighborhood of 90 per cent—hardly enough to justify the expenditure involved in a technicolor production with two such high-priced personalities.

It came as a surprise to find that any picture with these stars, who ranked twelfth and twentieth in the November Audit, could emerge so low. Nor is it easy to identify the factors which lead to such a disappointing performance. This is another case where we find a general lack of enthusiasm, without any vocal criticism of any particular element in the picture. In the circumstances one cannot do more than offer an informed guess as to the reasons underlying the public apathy.

The reader will recall our findings on the extent of public interest in horse racing, as reported in connection with WRAPPED IN Cellophane. We found that 83 per cent of all persons interviewed never visit any race-track, or go less than once a year; and we reported further that interest in football news is four times as common as interest in racing news.

It is perhaps this general lack of interest in horse racing which accounts for the unenthusiastic reaction of the public to the story of THE BLIND STALLION.

What vocal criticism we did encounter among theatre-goers was mostly along these lines:

- (1) "I don't like them racing pictures—there's too many of 'em; they're getting on my nerves."
- (2) "It sounds impossible—it couldn't happen. Who ever heard of a blind horse winning a race?"
- (3) "It looks like a trite formula job."

1

Now we come to an important finding: the picture emerged lower when tested with O'Brien and Young than when tested without cast. Here again one can do little more than guess at the reason for our finding. The most plausible explanations seem to be as follows:

- (1) The First Audit showed this remarkable contour for Pat O'Brien's marquee strength:

	<i>Index</i>
Males	102
Females	36
Boys 12-17	153
Men 18-30	98
Men 31-up	72

KNUTE ROCKNE was just the right vehicle for a player with this extraordinary contour. But *THE BLIND STALLION* does not fit—the story was found to have no special appeal either for men or for boys. In fact, the romantic angle is strong enough to kill it for a majority of O'Brien's husky young admirers. It is often an ominous sign when you find the star and the story appealing to opposite segments of the audience.

- (2) Loretta Young is much stronger with females than with males. But these same females are not interested in seeing Pat O'Brien. In *KENTUCKY* (RKO Theatres 116 per cent) Miss Young had Richard Greene—one of the few actors who is more popular with females than with males.

In short, it seems that Young and O'Brien are incompatible. And it also seems that O'Brien is one of those players who cannot be fitted into the current formula of "romantic comedies of modern times".

It is also worth reporting that, whereas Pat O'Brien is approximately twice as popular with the poor as with the rich, the story of *THE BLIND STALLION* has considerably more appeal for the rich than for the poor.

Princeton, February 12, 1941

THE BLIND STALLION PAT O'BRIEN, LORETTA YOUNG

"Comedy and romance in a racetrack setting. A gentleman trainer and his pretty fun-loving wife own one of the greatest horses of all time. When the horse goes blind, their marriage almost goes on the rocks, too. What happens when the blind stallion is entered in the famous \$100,000 Handicap Race at Santa Anita." (In technicolor).

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLVI

THE BAND PLAYED ON

In a series of three nationwide surveys we have exposed THE BAND PLAYED ON to a representative cross-section of theatre-goers. We find that the story has an *average* audience acceptance value—considerably higher than some of the other properties tested for Mr. Dieterle,* but not in the same league as ARMY SURGEON or THE MAYO BROTHERS.

THE BAND PLAYED ON appeals most to persons under eighteen; there is a marked lack of enthusiasm among persons over thirty.

So far as we have been able to detect, serious interest in the origins and historical development of swing is highly esoteric. The ordinary boys and girls who buy tickets to hear Benny Goodman and Kay Kyser do not seem to take any serious interest in the ancestry of swing. Their attitude is purely naive.

An examination of the comments recorded by our interviewers indicates that THE BAND PLAYED ON appeals strongly to these light-hearted young jitterbugs:

"I really like hot swing!"

"I'm a jitterbug. I like anything about swing."

"I got my own band and it's pretty hot."

"Like to hear that hot trombone player."

"Like musicals—hot ones—not BITTER SWEET kind."

"It sounds like it would liven us up a little bit. I'm crazy about dancing and like a good dance band."

There are indications that highbrow treatment would alienate this mass market of innocent young seekers after entertainment. In this connection the following comment was significant: "The music is swing and I like that—but it sounds just like a 'dry' picture the way it's written up here."

*THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER, JOHNNY BELINDA, THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY

Our findings indicate that the acceptance of THE BAND PLAYED ON is to a considerable extent dependent on finding a cast which would appeal to the youngsters who like swing. When we tested the story without cast, we received a number of conditional votes on these lines: *"If Cab Calloway plays, I go. He is my idol."* *"If it had Duke Ellington, it would be all right—otherwise no."* *"I despise pictures centering around dance bands—except for Kay Kyser."*

It was therefore no surprise to find that the picture emerged considerably higher when tested with Glenn Miller, Louis Armstrong and Betty Grable, than when tested without cast. With that cast it would start with every expectation of reaching 100 per cent on the RKO Theatre Department Classification.

We have not tested THE BAND PLAYED ON with motion picture personalities, but our guess is that the persons who like swing will not accept movie stars and faked music; they seem to demand real swing musicians.

Whether a cast of motion picture actors would broaden the picture's appeal to include theatre-goers who are not swing fans, is problematical. Those who did not vote for the story expressed themselves more violently than usual, and it is open to question whether any actor on earth could persuade them to sit through a jam session.

Assuming that the cost of hiring big name swing musicians is not too great for a picture with an expectancy of 100 per cent, it would appear wise, on the evidence, to purchase this property—on the following conditions:

- (1) That the treatment should exact the maximum entertainment value from the music.
- (2) That the treatment should minimize the historical aspect and the grim struggles.
- (3) That the cast should include a band leader and a colored trombonist (or trumpeter) who are popular with youngsters.
- (4) That the picture should be slanted at this mass market of entertainment-seeking kids.

Princeton, February 12, 1941

THE BAND PLAYED ON

"A saga of swing—told through the romance of a girl singer and a band leader who learn hot jazz in all-night jam sessions with a Negro who can make a trumpet talk. They play for the love of it, face poverty because of it, but play on year after year—until their music triumphs."

NOTE

Our tests of ARMY SURGEON have been made without cast. It is impossible to make any box-office prediction until the story is exposed to the public with cast. All we know at this point is the audience acceptance value of the story.

George Gallup

February 14, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLVII

ARMY SURGEON

In letters dated February 23 and February 29, 1940, we reported that *ARMY SURGEON*, an original idea conceived in this Institute, possesses a high audience acceptance value. On January 24 of this year you sent us Mr. John Twist's sixteen-page treatment of our idea, with instructions to measure its acceptance value.

It has been subjected to our usual test procedure, and once again *ARMY SURGEON* has emerged with flying colors—higher than any story tested in the last year, with the single exception of *THE MAYO BROTHERS*.

We have tested numerous properties which you were considering as vehicles for such personalities as Ginger Rogers, Ronald Colman, Charles Laughton, Paul Muni, George Raft and Carole Lombard. Some of these properties are Broadway plays which could not be purchased under six figures. Others are novels for which correspondingly large sums are demanded. In *ARMY SURGEON* you have a story which is worth more than any of the high-priced properties hitherto referred to us for testing.

It comes to you without the credentials of any famous playwright or novelist, and for that reason it runs the risk of being ushered around to the servants' entrance and produced as a humble program picture. But *ARMY SURGEON* possesses a credential which entitles it to a place among the studio's major productions. That credential is the endorsement of the theatre-going public.

During the past year we have brought other story ideas to your attention—*SUE BARTON*, *THE AMERICAN DOCTOR'S ODYSSEY*, *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*, *GENERAL LEE OF VIRGINIA*, *PARACHUTE INVASION*. In every case we were in a position to report satisfactory acceptance value, but we never promised more for these stories than we knew they could deliver. For example, we recommended only that *SUE BARTON* be given "consideration as material for a *program picture*".

It is our duty to be cautious and conservative. As a fact-finding organization, our job is to look for every possible snag, to find out the *worst* before the money is spent. That is why so many of our reports are bearish. Occasionally a prediction of disaster may turn out to be mistaken, but such cases provide no argument for more reckless navigation in the future.

It is against this background of caution that we ask you to consider our unusually positive recommendation in regard to *ARMY SURGEON*.

Mr. Twist's long synopsis is admirable, but since the story was begotten in this office, it may help you to have more details concerning our own visualization at the time when the original brief synopsis was evolved.

In some respects Mr. Twist's story departs from our conception. Perhaps his alterations (which are largely a matter of emphasis) are an improvement. Nevertheless we cannot refrain from re-stating the essential theme as we see it.

Our studies in the fields of magazine readership and book sales have demonstrated that the practice of medicine is a subject of great inherent interest both to men and to women, and one with great dramatic possibilities. The practice of medicine under fire obviously becomes even more dramatic. We hoped that ARMY SURGEON would capitalize on this combination.

Our idea was to present the day to day adventures of an idealistic, hard-working, able young doctor in these circumstances. Obviously the picture would build toward a climax—probably the terrific difficulties facing the medical corps during some famous battle. (We placed part of the action at Chateau-Thierry.) But previous to that, we believe the picture should portray many incidents involving the "Army Surgeon" and his hospital associates.

The romantic angle is more or less incidental. Our visualization of the incident in which the "nurse risks disgrace" is quite different from that in the script; in the script, she risks professional disgrace. Our idea was that she should risk personal scandal of some sort—perhaps by going to the surgeon's aid at a time when doing so involves admitting that she has been in his dug-out, or some such circumstance.

Finally, we feel that Mr. Twist's script makes the surgeon rather a dull stick. To be sure, he is all-absorbed in his work, but his work is of a type which in itself is adventurous. To us, he must be an over-worked, over-strained, entirely normal young man in whom war has submerged normal impulses of light-heartedness.

Specifically, we feel that so far as personalities are concerned, the contrast between the surgeon and the aviator is too much in the aviator's favor. As a matter of fact, we suspect that the character of the aviator is irrelevant. Against the background of Chateau-Thierry a conventional triangle situation seems trite. We had thought of the romance more in terms of the tenderness and grandeur which distinguished the love scenes in FAREWELL TO ARMS.

Princeton, February 13, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLVIII

TWO ON AN ISLAND

We have just finished testing *TWO ON AN ISLAND* as a vehicle for Ginger Rogers. Having underestimated the box-office performance of her last picture, we have left no stone unturned to avoid misjudging audience reactions to this one.

On the basis of our figures, it would appear that *TWO ON AN ISLAND*, with Ginger Rogers and Dennis Morgan, starts out with an expectancy of 105 per cent on the classification of the RKO Theatre Department.

The story appeals more to females than to males, and is most popular with females in the age group 18-30—a group which happens to be one of the main props of the American box-office. In this respect *TWO ON AN ISLAND* follows the pattern of *KITTY FOYLE*, which was also strongest with this group.

There is, however, one important difference between *KITTY FOYLE* and *TWO ON AN ISLAND*. Three months before the release of *KITTY FOYLE*, the novel had already been read throughout the United States by an estimated total of 980,000 persons—a figure which was subsequently swollen by the serialization in newspapers, and also by the cheap edition published by Grosset & Dunlap. In fact, a survey, conducted last week indicates that the number of persons who have read *KITTY FOYLE* has increased approximately 50 per cent since our September survey.

By contrast, *TWO ON AN ISLAND* ran on Broadway for only twelve weeks. We estimate that in its four weeks at the Broadhurst Theatre and subsequent eight weeks at the Hudson, it played to a maximum of 100,000 persons—and even that figure is arrived at by assuming every seat was filled at every performance.

These facts demonstrate that *TWO ON AN ISLAND* lacks the invaluable asset which is contributing so much to the success of *KITTY FOYLE*—a ready-made army of missionaries in every town and city.

It is interesting to record that, when tested with cast, *TWO ON AN ISLAND* was found to be considerably stronger in towns under 10,000 than in the larger cities, and stronger in the lower income levels than the higher. In this way the picture exactly follows the contour of Ginger Rogers' marquee value, as reported in the April and July Audits by size of community and economic status.

Here is one last consideration, which we hesitate to bring forward, since it is a matter of judgement upon which we are not qualified to express an opinion. The exhibitor traditionally demands fifty-two copies of last week's success, and in the case of Ginger Rogers he is doubtless demanding a repetition of the *KITTY FOYLE* formula. *TWO ON AN ISLAND* should satisfy that demand. But the exhibitor is sometimes wrong. Could it be that *TWO ON AN ISLAND* would suffer unfairly from comparison with *KITTY FOYLE*?

Princeton, February 14, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XLIX

MARQUEE VALUE OF RADIO STARS

February, 1941

In a nationwide survey recently completed, Audience Research Institute exposed a roster of thirty-three radio names to a representative cross-section of theatre-goers, asking them this question: "Some of these radio stars have already appeared in the movies, and some are making movies in Hollywood now. I'd like you to look at every name and imagine that it is on the front of a movie theatre. *Which names would make you want to buy a ticket to see the movie?*"

It is significant that the resultant ranking does not correlate with the Crossley ratings. For example, Major Bowes' program ranks high with radio listeners, but theatre-goers are not much interested in seeing the Major on the screen. The same applies to Ripley and Kate Smith.

Our roster was composed more or less at random. From time to time we plan to add other names. For example, we are now polling on sixty band leaders, and their ranking will be sent to you next week.

In the following table we show the marquee value of these first thirty-three radio stars in terms of the index employed in the Fourth Audit (November).

The possible margin of error due to the size of sample in this survey is approximately plus or minus five points. For that reason, too much significance should not be attached to minor differences of ranking.

<i>Rank</i>		<i>Index</i>
1	BING CROSBY	87
2	BOB HOPE	79
3	KAY KYSER	72
4	JACK BENNY	70
5	Charlie McCarthy	55
	Helen Hayes	55
7	Fibber McGee	50
8	Burns & Allen	46
9	Fannie Brice	41
10	Bob Burns	37
11	Fred Allen	35
12	Alec Templeton	34
13	Andrews Sisters	33
14	Walter Winchell	31
15	Lanny Ross	29
	Rudy Vallee	29
17	Bonnie Baker	28
18	Ezra Stone	27
19	Irene Rich	23
	Kate Smith	23
	Orrin Tucker	23
22	Bob Crosby	22
23	Al Pearce	20
24	Ben Bernie	19
	Jessica Dragonette	19
26	Amos 'n Andy	16
	Colonel Stoopnagle	16
28	Major Bowes	15
29	Bob Ripley	12
	Margaret Speaks	12
31	Bea Wain	8
32	Hedda Hopper	7
33	Gene & Glenn	6

Princeton, February 18, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT L

WEEKEND FOR THREE

We have tested Budd Schulberg's WEEKEND FOR THREE both without cast and as a vehicle for Ginger Rogers.

Before reporting our results, we must emphasize that tests on this type of story cannot be absolutely conclusive at such an early stage in their life history. For example, we tested Molnar's comedy THE PLAY'S THE THING and it emerged very low. But that was before Sam and Bella Spewack had been mentioned, and it is perfectly possible that they can turn it into a story with high audience acceptance value.

This difficulty applies to all comedy ideas in embryonic form. It does not apply to more definite, cut-and-dried story ideas, such as THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED, VIGIL IN THE NIGHT, BOOM TOWN, ARMY SURGEON, or THE MAYO BROTHERS, because with this kind of property we know what we are testing.

In reporting our findings on WEEKEND FOR THREE, therefore, we ask the reader to remember that we have tested Mr. Schulberg's sixty-two page original, and nothing else. We have *not* studied audience reaction to a Spewack or Krasna version of the story.

We find that WEEKEND FOR THREE, tested without cast, is a story with slightly higher than average acceptance value. There are indications, however, that this kind of comedy is beginning to pall: "This is just like TOO MANY WIVES—HUSBANDS—and all the others."

The more a formula is milked, the more discriminating and critical becomes the audience reaction, and the more important it becomes to provide some basic element which will differentiate your picture from its predecessors in the same vein. Theatre-goers do not show as much enthusiasm about the basic situation in WEEKEND FOR THREE as we found for McCarey's Enoch Arden situation last year: "Plot is not so good—getting rid of a guest not

interesting." Other respondents foresaw that Mr. Schulberg's theme would wear a little thin before the end of the picture: "Sounds like it would just drag on and on."

But in spite of these shortcomings WEEKEND FOR THREE emerged above average when tested without cast. Higher, for example, than TWO ON AN ISLAND.

But here is an interesting discovery: When tested with Ginger Rogers, WEEKEND FOR THREE emerged appreciably *lower* than TWO ON AN ISLAND with Ginger Rogers.

Our evidence indicates that, with different casting, WEEKEND FOR THREE would do fairly good business. When we tested it with Jean Arthur and Robert Montgomery, the result was much more promising—about 105 per cent on the RKO scale. We also have reason to believe that it would be acceptable as a vehicle for Cary Grant and Irene Dunne. These four players are more generally identified than Ginger Rogers as light comedy stars.

Warners have recently released HONEYMOON FOR THREE. You have MELODY FOR THREE coming along next month. The title WEEKEND FOR THREE would undoubtedly suffer from confusion with these other two.

Princeton, February 18, 1941

WEEKEND FOR THREE

"Light-hearted comedy about the plight of a young married couple who are driven to desperation trying to get rid of their weekend guest—he just stays and stays. As a last resort the husband pretends to leave on a trip, but complications follow when the guest still stays—*alone with the wife!*"

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LII

DEMAND FOR STARS UNDER 25

We have written elsewhere about the importance of *self-identification* as a factor underlying the contours of marquee value. It is almost certainly this factor which makes a large proportion of stars most popular with their own age and their own sex.

For example, Mickey Rooney and Jackie Cooper have their greatest following among boys. Deanna Durbin, Jane Withers and Judy Garland are most popular among girls in their own age group. Muni is strongest with men over thirty-one, as are also Lionel Barrymore, William Powell and Edward Arnold. May Robson is particularly popular with elderly females.

Now here is a curious fact: while 52 per cent of all attendance is by persons under twenty-five years of age, only 2.1 per cent of "A" actors and 21.3 per cent of "A" actresses are under twenty-five.*

This suggests that the cardinal factor underlying the popularity of Rooney, Durbin, Garland and Cooper has been their youth. It suggests further that there are not nearly enough adolescent stars to satisfy the demand. Perhaps it would be good business for RKO to concentrate on building up one or more personalities in this age group.

Here is a much richer market potential than exists in the age group of most new players being groomed by Hollywood today.

George Gallup

Princeton, February 24, 1941.

*According to Dr. Leo C. Rosten, head of the Motion Picture Research Project, as reported in the December issue of THE SCREEN ACTOR.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LIII

WATER GYPSIES

Maureen O'Hara does not rank among the first hundred players. Her power to sell tickets is still strictly limited, and it cannot be expected that any picture in which she is the sole marquee name will break records at the box-office. But that is no reason why she should not be provided with a more acceptable vehicle than WATER GYPSIES.

We have just measured the audience acceptance value of this story without cast, and it emerged lower than anything submitted by RKO since BILL OF DIVORCEMENT.

The reasons for this general lack of interest in WATER GYPSIES are as follows:

- (1) The plot may be basically the same as KITTY FOYLE. But the Philadelphia white-collar girl is one thing, and Jane Bell, the Hammersmith water gypsy, is something very different. Her environment is almost as foreign to the experience of American audiences as life on the Ganges. A Chicago stenographer simply cannot project herself into the life of a bargee's daughter on the Thames.

If the story could be transplanted to the Hudson or the Mississippi, the result might be different. But even then it is open to question whether the situation would have more than a limited appeal. We recall that Mr. Herbert's novel was enthusiastically received only by those English people who share his passion for the Thames and for Cockney types; its appeal was not sufficiently broad, even in England, to make it a major best-seller.

- (2) The heroine's Cockney naivete does not arouse the sympathy of her more sophisticated American sisters. We have reason to believe that theatregoers do not like their cinderellas to start too low down in the social scale. In PRIMROSE PATH Ellie May Adams was a little too low down to be sympathetic; so was Amy Peters in THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED. Of course there are exceptions to this rule, but in general it would seem that a too-sordid social background is a grave handicap.

- (3) The American public is thinking of England today in terms of air-raids and war. We encountered resistance to the idea of a story with a *peaceful* English background. In this connection the following comment was typical: "*I don't think people are floating on barges in England now.*"

So much for audience reactions to the story when tested without cast. It remains to report the results obtained when we tested *WATER GYPSIES* with cast. The name we were instructed to use was Maureen O'Hara. Since it was necessary for technical reasons to name a male personality as well, we used Joel McCrea.

Even with McCrea the picture touched rock bottom. We cannot recall any instance of a lower vote.

We have no point of reference in that nethermost section of the wave-band, and it is impossible to do more than guess at the box-office result; certainly lower than 65 per cent on the Classification of the RKO Theatre Department.

If we may be permitted to make a suggestion in regard to Miss O'Hara, it is this: cast her in a picture with a one hundred per cent *American* background. So far she has been seen twice as an English girl (*JAMAICA INN* and *BILL OF DIVORCEMENT*) and once as a French girl (*HUNCHBACK*). To the American public she is still a foreigner.

She needs an American role before the American public will take her to their hearts. And that is surely where a girl with her beauty and ability belongs.

Princeton, February 26, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LIV

SILVER CITY

On January 13 we received Jerry Cady's first draft treatment of VIRGINIA CITY, dated April 27, 1939. In view of the fact that Warner Brothers have already released a picture called VIRGINIA CITY, we proceeded to test Mr. Cady's VIRGINIA CITY under the title SILVER CITY.

On January 30 we telegraphed you as follows:

"Preliminary indications are that SILVER CITY is a story with high audience acceptance value."

It is disappointing to have to report that in subsequent tests SILVER CITY did not fulfill its early promise. On the basis of our final results, the story does not appear to merit more than a very moderate investment. While we have not seen any estimate of the cost of making such a picture, we would guess that it would necessarily be rather heavy.

We are far from certain as to the factors underlying the lack of enthusiasm for SILVER CITY. It is possible that there have been rather too many pictures like SILVER CITY in the recent past. As in the case of "romantic comedies of modern times", we detect a definite, if only temporary, increase in public discrimination:

"Heavens no! I got fed up with VIRGINIA CITY."

"Won't they ever run out of Western cities as movie subjects?"

SILVER CITY appears to lack sufficient individuality to differentiate it from its immediate predecessors—VIRGINIA CITY, DODGE CITY, ARIZONA, WESTERN UNION, SANTA FE TRAIL, RETURN OF FRANK JAMES, THE WESTERNER, DARK COMMAND, THE DALTONS, *et cetera*.

It is possible that our synopsis oversimplifies SILVER CITY. Perhaps the story does actually contain some significant points of difference from other neo-Westerns. But we know that the great mass of theatregoers themselves oversimplify their diagnoses of motion pictures.

It does not require any research institute to prove that fact. Let any producer steel himself to listen at the keyhole while his cook is describing a

picture to her friends. If she is anywhere near typical, she will always reduce her description to the crudest account of its basic elements.

Constant exposure to connoisseurs—such as one's colleagues in the industry—can easily mislead one into thinking that the theatregoing public is more perspicacious and well-informed than is actually the case.

It is significant that our predictions have been most accurate in the field of *action* pictures. We were right on ALLEGHENY UPRISING, DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK, HUDSON'S BAY, NORTH WEST MOUNTED POLICE and UNION PACIFIC. The only action picture on which we have missed badly was THE SUN NEVER SETS; we over-estimated it.

The odds on our estimate of SILVER CITY being accurate seem to be high.

Princeton, February 28, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LV

MARQUEE VALUE OF BAND LEADERS

February 1941

Every two months we report the marquee value of one hundred and ten motion picture players. Last week we reported the marquee value of thirty-three radio stars on the same basis. In this report you will find the relative value of fifty-nine band leaders.

Kay Kyser receives one and a half times as many votes as Tommy Dorsey, his nearest competitor.

<i>First</i>	KYSER, KAY
<i>Second</i>	Dorsey, Tommy
<i>Third</i>	Whiteman, Paul
<i>Third</i>	Miller, Glenn
<i>Fifth</i>	Lombardo, Guy
<i>Sixth</i>	Waring, Fred
<i>Seventh</i>	King, Wayne
<i>Seventh</i>	Duchin, Eddie
<i>Ninth</i>	Vallee, Rudy
<i>Tenth</i>	Heidt, Horace

GROUP II

Bernie, Ben
CROSBY, BOB
Ennis, Skinny
Goodman, Benny
Harris, Phil
Krupa, Gene
Shaw, Artie
Spitalny, Phil
Tucker, Orrin
Weems, Ted

GROUP III

Cugat, Xavier
Dorsey, Jimmy
Ellington, Duke
Fields, Shep
Garber, Jan
Kostelanetz, Andre
Nelson, Ozzie
Noble, Ray
Trotter, John Scott

GROUP IV

Fio Rito, Ted
Jurgens, Dick
Kassel, Art
Kaye, Sammy
Lopez, Vincent
Lyman, Abe
Masters, Frankie
McCoy, Clyde
Paige, Raymond
Scott, Raymond

GROUP V

Barron, Blue
Basie, Count
Byrne, Bobby
Clinton, Larry
Gordon, Gray
Herman, Woody
Jones, Isham
Lunceford, Jimmie
Pollack, Ben
Savitt, Jan

GROUP VI

Barnet, Charlie
Bradley, Will
Chester, Bob
Courtney, Del
Hallett, Mal
James, Harry
Noble, Leighton
Pastor, Tony
Reisman, Leo
Warnow, Mark

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LVI

INTEREST IN RADIO SERIALS

In a series of nationwide surveys Audience Research Institute has measured the interest of the theatre-going public in sixty radio serials as material for motion pictures. SCATTERGOOD BAINES emerges eighth in rank order.

A representative cross-section of theatregoers were shown lists of twenty serials at a time. The question was as follows: "Here's a list of some radio serials. Some of these serials are being made into movies. Are there any on that list you yourself would especially enjoy seeing *as a movie*?"

ONE MAN'S FAMILY emerged an easy winner, receiving more than twice as many votes as its nearest competitor. Four among the first fourteen serials have a medical background.

The Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting (Crossley) shows that most radio serials have an audience which is preponderantly housewife. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in our poll the general level of acceptance was nearly twice as high among women as among men.

There are certain differences between our results and the current Crossley ratings. Why? Because:

- (1) The motion picture cross-section is radically different from Crossley's radio cross-section.
- (2) The market for a picture based on any radio serial is a function of the total number of persons who have *ever* listened to the program, while the Crossley rating reflects only the audience at one point of time. There are serials on our list which are no longer on the air; they accumulated their following in years gone by.

Thirty-five per cent of all persons interviewed had heard SCATTERGOOD BAINES on the air at one time or another. The corresponding figure for ONE MAN'S FAMILY was 70 per cent.

MORE]

The results printed below must not be taken literally. Because 10 per cent say they "would enjoy" SCATTERGOOD BAINES, it does not mean that 10 per cent actually will *see* the RKO picture. Far from it.

To arrive at any estimate of the actual box-office expectancy of any picture based on one of these serials, it would be necessary to subject it to our usual test procedures, complete with cast.

Meanwhile, however, this list will help to guide you in the selection of serials for future consideration. If you become interested in any one of them, please instruct us to carry out definitive tests.

<i>Rank</i>		<i>% Saying They Would Enjoy As A Movie</i>
1	One Man's Family	31.6%
2	Pepper Young's Family	14.6
3	Stella Dallas	14.0
4	Women in White	11.4
5	Young Dr. Malone	11.1
6	Life Can Be Beautiful	10.7
7	The O'Neills	10.1
8	Scattergood Baines	10.0
9	Vic and Sade	9.7
10	Joyce Jordan, Girl Interne	9.2
11	Captain Midnight	8.9
12	David Harum	8.6
13	Backstage Wife	8.5
14	Road of Life	8.1
15	Guiding Light	7.9
15	Hilltop House	7.9
15	Ma Perkins	7.9
18	John's Other Wife	7.6
19	Second Husband	7.5
20	Romance of Helen Trent	7.4
21	Myrt and Marge	7.3
22	The Goldbergs	7.2
23	Bachelor's Children	7.1
24	Kathleen Norris	6.5
25	Lorenzo Jones	6.2
26	Girl Alone	6.1
27	Big Sister	5.9
28	Just Plain Bill	5.7
29	Betty and Bob	5.6
29	Valiant Lady	5.5
31	Amanda of Honeymoon Hill	5.1
32	Against the Storm	5.0
33	Mary Marlin	4.8
34	Linda's First Love	4.7
35	Man I Married	4.6

MORE]

<i>Rank</i>		<i>% Saying They Would Enjoy As A Movie</i>
35	Our Gal Sunday	4.6
37	Stepmother	4.5
38	Kate Hopkins, Angel of Mercy	4.4
39	Arnold Grimm's Daughter	4.3
39	My Son and I	4.3
39	Orphans of Divorce	4.3
42	When a Girl Marries	4.2
43	Lone Journey	4.1
43	Young Widder Brown	4.1
45	Kitty Keene	3.9
46	Johnson Family	3.6
47	Light of the World	3.3
48	Houseboat Hannah	3.1
49	Home of the Brave	2.9
49	Lost Empire	2.9
49	Government Girl	2.9
52	Heart of Julia Blake	2.7
53	Ellen Randolph	2.5
53	Portia Faces Life	2.5
55	Editor's Daughter	2.2
56	Right to Happiness	2.1
57	We, The Abbots	1.9
58	Mother O' Mine	1.5
58	This Small Town	1.5
58	Women of Courage	1.5

Princeton, March 3, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LVII

THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE

On February 10 we received instructions to measure the audience acceptance value of *THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE*, an original story by Fanya Ross and Aléen Leslie.

On February 24 we telegraphed you as follows:

"When exposed to a representative cross-section of all theatre-goers *THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE* received more votes than any property you have submitted for a long time. It emerged higher than the first twelve properties enumerated in our letter of February 5.* But no box office prediction is possible without cast. Recent experience indicates that a recognized comedy team is almost essential for the type of property.

Final results have now been tabulated, and they confirm the substance of the telegram.

THE WIDOW comes in the same general story classification as *WEEKEND FOR THREE*, but its audience appeal is considerably greater. While we cannot be absolutely certain why this is so, the most probable explanation is that theatre-goers find *THE WIDOW* a more substantial story; *WEEKEND FOR THREE* was widely criticized as containing only enough material for one scene.

If you will designate a cast for *THE WIDOW* (or several alternative casts) we will proceed to further tests with a view to assessing the picture's actual box-office potential.

On the basis of our experience with this type of property we would expect final results to vary widely according to the cast. With Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, James Stewart, Rosalind Russell or Melvyn Douglas the picture might reasonably be expected to emerge as high as *MY FAVORITE WIFE*; with Ronald Colman or Ginger Rogers the result would be less satisfactory.

*Tragedy At Mayerling, My Life With Caroline, Mr. Pinkie, Unexpected Uncle, Grand Central Market, The Band Played on, The Blind Stallion, Weekend For Three, Wrapped in Cellophane, Two On An Island, Silver City, Water Gypsies.

MORE]

The following comments on the story of THE WIDOW, as recorded verbatim by our interviewers, are a representative sample:

"Imagine very amusing—C. Grant, R. Russell."

"Sounds funny. J. Stewart would be a good guy to go away and get lost."

"Sounds like it might be fast-moving, witty conversation."

"Sounds like lots of good laughs."

"I think it's very, very funny, at least in the outline here."

"Just to read the title would make you curious."

"It has a most interesting title anyway."

"It gets away from realism at a point where you need it."

"Must be a lot of wisecracking, kidding and joking."

"The makings of one of those dizzy comedies."

THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE

Hilarious Comedy about a rich young bachelor who lends his apartment to a pretty girl while he goes on a cruise. When he returns, he finds he's officially dead and his pretty "widow" is engaged to his worst enemy. How he wins her back by swindling his rival, then calling the deal off—just for her.

Princeton, March 6, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LVIII

BOX OFFICE POISON

Every two months we measure the capacity of one hundred and fourteen players to sell tickets at the box office, but up to now we have not known much about *why* some players sell more tickets than others.

Recently, however, we have begun to delve into the factors which attract ticket buyers to movie stars. The whole problem is extremely complicated, and it may be many months before we are ready to report even our preliminary conclusions.

Meanwhile you may be interested to see the results of an experimental reconnaissance of another closely related problem—why people do *not* like certain stars.

In our Audit of Marquee Values we show respondents long lists of players and ask them which names would make them want to buy a ticket, etc. In the case of Edward Arnold, nine per cent say they would want to buy a ticket. We decided to study the 91 per cent who do *not* want to buy a ticket to see Mr. Arnold.

What is their attitude to him? Do they actually dislike him; would he keep them away from an otherwise attractive program? Or is their attitude one of indifference?

We wanted to find out exactly what percentage actively dislike not only Mr. Arnold but also his one hundred and thirteen fellow actors and actresses; which of these personalities exercise the negative power to keep people away from the box office, and in what degree. In other words we decided to investigate the facts behind Harry Brandt's famous advertisement.

Before reporting the results of this study, we must ask you to recognize the fundamental difference between active *dislike* and ordinary indifference. In general, we find that the average theatregoer is surprisingly tolerant and un-critical; most of his reactions are on the positive side of the wave-band—he likes a player a lot, or a little, or he is indifferent to him. Only very seldom does he actually *dislike* any player.

In our nationwide study we exposed the usual roster of players to a representative cross-section of theatregoers, asking this question: "I'd like you to look at every name and tell me if there are any players on that list whom you particularly dislike—whose presence in a movie would keep you from seeing it?"

Now here is the significant point. If you, sir, were invited to name the players who exercise the power to keep you away from the box office, you would find it easy to call out a very large number of players who are, in the Senate phase, "personally obnoxious" to you. The extraordinary thing is that the average theatregoer names *only five* on the whole list of one hundred and fourteen.

W. C. Fields is named more frequently than any other player, but even so only 22 per cent say that his name on the marquee would actually keep them away from the theatre.

The following table shows the percentage of theatregoers who actively dislike each player on our roster—the percentage who would be kept away from the picture by the presence of that player in the cast.

		<i>% Who Say They Dislike The Player So Much That They Would Be Kept Away From Theatre</i>
<i>Rank</i>		<i>%</i>
1	Fields, W. C.	22
2	Garbo, Greta	18
3	Lamour, Dorothy	14
4	Dietrich, Marlene	13
5	Eddy, Nelson	12
	Hepburn, Katharine	12
7	Benny, Jack	11
	Burns, Bob	11
	Temple, Shirley	11
10	Cagney, James	10
	Laughton, Charles	10
	Withers, Jane	10
13	Chaplin, Charles	9

*% Who Say They Dislike
The Player So Much That They
Would Be Kept Away From Theatre*

<i>Rank</i>		<i>%</i>
14	Crawford, Joan	8
	Hope, Bob	8
	MacDonald, Jeanette	8
	Raft, George	8
18	Ameche, Don	7
	Boyer, Charles	7
	Henie, Sonja	7
	Howard, Leslie	7
	Lamarr, Hedy	7
	Welles, Orson	7
24	Crosby, Bing	6
	Davis, Bette	6
	Dix, Richard	6
	Powell, Dick	6
28	Astaire, Fred	5
	Beery, Wallace	5
	Benchley, Robert	5
	Faye, Alice	5
	Greene, Richard	5
	Muni, Paul	5
	Robinson, Edw. G.	5
	Taylor, Robert	5
36	Blondell, Joan	4
	Bogart, Humphrey	4
	Cooper, Jackie	4
	Donat, Robert	4
	Fairbanks, Douglas, Jr.	4
	Gable, Clark	4
	Garfield, John	4
	Marshall, Herbert	4
	McLaglen, Victor	4
	Montgomery, Robert	4
	Powell, Eleanor	4
	Power, Tyrone	4
	Rathbone, Basil	4
	Rooney, Mickey	4
	Stanwyck, Barbara	4
	Wayne, John	4

*% Who Say They Dislike
The Player So Much That They
Would Be Kept Away From Theatre*

<i>Rank</i>		<i>%</i>
52	Arnold, Edward	3
	Baxter, Warner	3
	Colbert, Claudette	3
	Flynn, Errol	3
	Fonda, Henry	3
	Francis, Kay	3
	Goddard, Paulette	3
	Lombard, Carole	3
	Morris, Wayne	3
	O'Brien, Pat	3
	Powell, William	3
	Shearer, Norma	3
	Sheridan, Ann	3
	Shirley, Anne	3
	Tone, Franchot	3
67	Bennett, Joan	2
	Colman, Roland	2
	Darnell, Linda	2
	Dunne, Irene	2
	Garland, Judy	2
	Leigh, Vivien	2
	Lynn, Jeffrey	2
	March, Frederic	2
	Murphy, George	2
	Neagle, Anna	2
	Oberon, Merle	2
	Olivier, Laurence	2
	Rogers, Ginger	2
	Russell, Rosalind	2
	Southern, Ann	2
	Sullavan, Margaret	2
	Trevor, Claire	2
	Turner, Lana	2
	Young, Loretta	2
86	Aherne, Brian	1
	Arthur, Jean	1
	Ayres, Lew	1
	Barrymore, Lionel	1
	Brent, George	1
	Carroll, Madeleine	1

*% Who Say They Dislike
The Player So Much That They
Would Be Kept Away From Theatre*

<i>Rank</i>		<i>%</i>
86	Day, Laraine	1
	DeHavilland, Olivia	1
	Douglas, Melvyn	1
	Durbin, Deanna	1
	Garson, Greer	1
	Grant, Cary	1
	Loy, Myrna	1
	Lane, Priscilla	1
	MacMurray, Fred	1
	McCrea, Joel	1
	Niven, David	1
	O'Hara, Maureen	1
	Pidgeon, Walter	1
	Scott, Martha	1
	Scott, Randolph	1
	Stewart, James	1
	Tracy, Spencer	1
	Young, Robert	1
110	Cooper, Gary	0.5
	Fontaine, Joan	0.5
	Milland, Ray	0.5
	O'Sullivan, Maureen	0.5
	Stone, Lewis	0.5

It might reasonably be expected that the "dislike" ranking would be an exact reverse of the "would buy" ranking. This is not the case. For example, Bette Davis, who ranked fourth in "would buy" in the November Audit, ranks as high as twenty-fourth in "dislike".

Or you might reasonably expect that the most popular players would also receive the most "dislike" votes, on account of their greater circulation. But neither is this the case. For example, Gary Cooper is ranked eighth in "would buy" and one hundred and tenth in "dislike".

In other words there is no relationship, direct or indirect, between liking and disliking, between positive and negative marquee value.

The causes of dislike are often buried deep in the subconscious and it will take a battery of psycho-analysts to find out precisely *why* some motion picture players are disliked. You will notice, however, that the players with the high "dislike" vote tend to fall into well defined groups: comedians, professional

lovers, superior persons, foreign females, child actors, singers, tough guys and mugging hams.

Five among the first twenty in dislike are comedians: W. C. Fields, Bob Burns, Jack Benny, Charlie Chaplin and Bob Hope. Their dislike vote comes mostly from females.

Professional lovers, both male and female, tend to earn the dislike of their own sex: Lamour keeps no less than 19 per cent of her fellow women away from the theatre, and Nelson Eddy is anathema to 17 per cent of male theatregoers. Boyer is actively disliked by 13 per cent of male theatregoers.

The American public is quick to resent any suggestion of superiority in a player's manner. Time without number our interviewers have received complaints about this and that movie star being high hat, condescending, conceited, aloof, stuck-up, snobbish, etc. It is probably this factor which makes 16 per cent of all female theatregoers actively dislike Katharine Hepburn.

Some of the child stars receive a considerable dislike vote: Shirley Temple, Jane Withers, Mickey Rooney.

Singers Nelson Eddy, Jeanette MacDonald and Bing Crosby rank high in dislike votes. Perhaps Don Ameche belongs in this same group.

Tough guys Cagney and Raft are disliked by 13 per cent and 10 per cent of female theatregoers respectively.

It is interesting to study the personalities who are more or less free from "dislike". Gary Cooper, the ultra-wholesome American, stands at the bottom of the list as the least disliked of all. Other players who seem to be almost universally congenial are Ray Milland, Lewis Stone, Joan Fontaine, Maureen O'Sullivan—all amiable, unassuming, native American types.

Princeton, March 13, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LIX

THE CORN IS GREEN

"The fabulous prices paid by movie studios in recent months for Manhattan stage properties, many of which are considered to be of questionable value to the screen, has aroused suspicion in some quarters that Hollywood is the victim of Broadway log-rolling. In some cases this season fortunes have been spent for material of such dubious film quality that had the same stories been offered as originals for \$1,250 for B pictures they would have been rejected."

So wrote Douglas Churchill in THE NEW YORK TIMES three days after we had telegraphed you the following report on THE CORN IS GREEN:

"Audience acceptance value of THE CORN IS GREEN without cast is below average. Many moviegoers seem to find it too heavy. On the part of the minority who are enthusiastic we find an unusually articulate spontaneous demand to see Ethel Barrymore herself in the part. Suggest testing it first with Ethel; then with alternate cast."

Our diagnosis is that this property is an extremely risky bet. It is always possible that a consummate director—Sam Wood, for example—could turn it into a screen masterpiece. But the odds seem to be stacked heavily against *any* director who is handed this assignment.

This is not the first time we have come across a successful stage play which fails to appeal to motion picture audiences. The classic example in our experience was ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS.

The motion picture audience is infinitely broader based than the legitimate theatre audience. A play can succeed on Broadway or Shaftesby Avenue provided it appeals to the upper income levels, but the present organization of the motion picture industry demands that any story which is to succeed on the screen must appeal to *all* income levels.

The Emlyn Williams play is a typical case in point. We find that it is fairly strong with persons in the upper income groups, but markedly weak with the great mass of ordinary theatregoers.

The reaction we obtained would no doubt exasperate any advocate of serious screen drama. We can only report the comments recorded by our interviewers, without attempting to justify the level of taste they reveal:

"I don't care for any deep story."

"It seems to me that it is too literary."

"Heard a reader give it—that's enough."

*"I imagine this would be considered a 'good' picture,
but lots of people wouldn't like it."*

"This sounds a little too dramatic."

"Don't think I'd see that—sounds too dramatic."

If it were possible to purchase THE CORN IS GREEN for a very low figure, and to make the picture on a very modest budget, then it would be safe for RKO to proceed, on the assumption that the picture would find favor with the limited few. But the dizzy prices required to purchase other Broadway plays in recent months suggests that THE CORN IS GREEN is not to be thought of in terms of anything but a rather considerable budget.

The maternal element in THE CORN IS GREEN guarantees it a modicum of female interest, but so far as American film audiences are concerned it suffers from two major handicaps:

- (1) The story is too grim, too serious.
- (2) The background is foreign, which makes it difficult for American theatregoers to identify themselves with the characters. (CHEERS FOR MISS BISHOP does not suffer from this hurdle.)

On the part of the minority who are enthusiastic about THE CORN IS GREEN, we find an unusually vocal demand to see Ethel Barrymore in the picture:

"I'd like to see this if you could get Ethel Barrymore to play in it."

"Because Ethel Barrymore is supposed to be in her most famous role."

"Wouldn't see it without Ethel Barrymore."

We therefore suggest further tests, both with Miss Barrymore and with a selection of available motion picture personalities. May we have your instructions?

Princeton, March 13, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LX

GEORGE SANDERS

It is no easy job to measure the marquee value of a comparatively new player whose claim to fame depends mainly on his performances in supporting roles. There are too many theatregoers who know him by sight and by the roles he has played, and not enough who know him by name.

When measured by the technique employed in our standard Audit of Marquee Values—by name only—George Sanders emerges approximately equal to John Wayne, Walter Pidgeon, Richard Dix. (See November Audit.)

With players like Wayne, Pidgeon and Dix, who have been known to the public for a period of years, the marquee values reported in our Audit are fairly stable. But in the case of a new player like George Sanders, the marquee value is still elastic. While Wayne, Pidgeon and Dix have probably reached their limit, Sanders undoubtedly has not yet reached his limit.

Right now only 44 per cent of all theatregoers know that "George Sanders" is a movie actor. The remaining 56 per cent cannot identify the name.

When shown a photograph of Sanders, 32 per cent were able to identify him by name. A further 19 per cent recognized him as having appeared in REBECCA, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT or THE SAINT series, but did not know his name. The remaining 49 per cent were unable to identify the photograph in any way. Here are the comparable identification figures on photographs of Clark Gable, George Sanders and Dennis Morgan.

	<i>% Identifying Photograph</i>
Clark Gable	97
George Sanders	32
Dennis Morgan	18

These figures indicate that Sanders is only at the beginning of his career as a marquee name. How far he can climb can best be judged by studying audience reactions to his performance in pictures to date.

With this in mind we questioned a representative cross-section of theatregoers on their reactions to his personality in REBECCA, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT, and THE SAINT series.

Analysis of the comments recorded verbatim by our interviewers reveals the following facts:

- (1) Sanders has become typed as a professional Englishman—"typically English", "real English type", "funny Englishman", etc. So much of an actor's marquee value depends on the theatregoer's ability to identify himself with the actor that any obstacle which interferes with this process is bound to militate against that actor ever becoming a first-class marquee name. American theatregoers cannot easily identify themselves with foreign actors.
- (2) Nearly everybody who remembers Sanders in REBECCA thinks of him as a villain—"a good snake", "the seducing type", "a sneaky guy", "a cad", "ornery", "an admirable heel", "he makes a lovely villain", etc., etc.

This impression will have to be lived down. We received too many comments along these lines: "He's better as a bad man. The Saint really isn't good in his line" and "He can *sneer* better, he's not very good as the detective".

- (3) Theatregoers appreciate Sanders' studied naturalness: "He's a *natural* actor—no put-on," "He doesn't try to act too smart," "He's calm and natural," "He's just like you'd be in real life—nothing put on."

Our conclusions may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Sanders is only now beginning to gain recognition and it is more than probable that his marquee value will increase from picture to picture, anyway up to three more pictures. By that time almost all theatregoers will have had a chance to get acquainted with him.
- (2) After he has achieved 100 per cent "circulation," he may or may not continue to rise, depending on the extent to which he is able to overcome the handicaps outlined above.
- (3) Every effort should be made to put him in pictures with an American background. To continue using him in English stories is to spoil his chances of ever becoming a great ticket-seller.
- (4) If the salary demanded seems excessive, it should be remembered that Sanders is already on a par with John Wayne, Walter Pidgeon and Richard Dix as a *ticket-seller*.

Princeton, March 20, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXI

SILAS MARNER, IVANHOE, LORNA DOONE

The December issue of THE NEWS LETTER, a monthly publication of the Bureau of Educational Research at Ohio State University carried the following paragraph:

"To RKO Radio: Here are three good books which high school students throughout the country want to see filmed: SILAS MARNER, IVANHOE and LORNA DOONE. There are six and one-half million high school students, by the way."

We have now tested these stories. We find that IVANHOE has a moderate audience acceptance value, while SILAS MARNER and LORNA DOONE fail to interest more than a very small minority of theatregoers.

SILAS MARNER

It is true that a large number of persons have read SILAS MARNER. The trouble is that they did not read it of their own free will—they were forced to read it in school and they don't seem to remember the experience with any degree of enjoyment. "I had to wade through this in English course and I detested it"; "I got my belly full in high school"; etc.

Theatregoers complain that SILAS MARNER is "not a happy picture", "it's too fairy tale like", "it's dead and dry".

LORNA DOONE

While we were not surprised by this lack of enthusiasm for SILAS MARNER, the poor showing of LORNA DOONE was not so easy to foresee. After all, LORNA DOONE is one of the most sentimental love stories ever written, and one might be pardoned for guessing that the elements it contains in such lavish abundance would appeal to any woman at any period of history. Why is this not the case?

Frankly, we don't know. But we can guess. We have noticed that, with only a handful of exceptions, the only costume pictures which have done good business in recent years were tremendous action pieces—MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY, SEA HAWK, ROBIN HOOD. Most of the exceptions were current best-sellers.

LORNA DOONE is a costume picture, it is not primarily an action picture and it is not a current best-seller. Those three facts in combination have a tendency to produce box-office failures.

LORNA DOONE is a romance, and we have reason to believe that romances succeed only when large numbers of the audience can project themselves into the clinches—when Miss and Mrs. John Citizen can identify themselves with the heroine. This is psychologically difficult unless the heroine bears some reasonable resemblance to the ladies in the audience. If she speaks with a strong foreign accent, or wears a crinoline, the illusion is impossible, and the ladies in the audience remain detached and unmoved.

Your 1941 Chicago stenographer can easily identify herself with Kitty Foyle, but Lorna Doone is a very different proposition.

That is guesswork, partly. The fact remains that, whatever the cause, LORNA DOONE lacks appeal for present-day American audiences.

It is just possible that casting LORNA DOONE with recognized marquee names would make a big difference. When Mrs. John Citizen saw her old friends Tyrone Power and Norma Shearer making love to each other in eighteenth century costume, she was apparently able to discount their disguise and project herself into the clinches, with the consequence that MARIE ANTOINETTE did big business.

In such cases the stars bridge the gap between Mrs. Citizen and the alien setting of the story. What the audience sees is not Marie Antoinette in the Arms of Count Axel de Fersen, but Miss Shearer in the arms of Mr. Power.

In the same way it is possible that LORNA DOONE might do well if tested with a cast of well-known stars. But it is essential that they should be old friends of the public—a team of newcomers will not do the trick, however brilliant they are.

IVANHOE

We understand that IVANHOE has not been made as a picture in twenty-five years, and when it was made, it was by Universal and was successful.

Our findings indicate that IVANHOE suffers from the taint of the school curriculum.* One old man, well on in the sixties, let the cat out of the bag when he said "Hell no, I'm not going back to school for anyone". We received many other comments along these lines. "It would bring back old scholastic thoughts", "It reminds me too much of English and school", etc. In our survey IVANHOE was actually voted the "most educational" of the three stories under consideration.

As was to be expected, IVANHOE also suffers from the fact that it is a costume picture—"Those men in costume sure look goofy. I'd rather see 'em dressed like we are".

Worse still, IVANHOE is not only a costume picture—it is a costume picture about a foreign country, and other things being equal, American theatregoers seem to prefer pictures with an American setting.

*The first IVANHOE was made before the public had learned to beware of 'educational' pictures.

The one thing which redeems IVANHOE is its resemblance to ROBIN HOOD. Many of the favorable reactions we encountered were based on our reference to ROBIN HOOD in the synopsis. It is possible that Messrs. Curtiz and Flynn with the aid of the Technicolor Corporation could make the picture a success—"THE ADVENTURES OF IVANHOE—(No History)"

But Flynn is not available, and we question whether there is any other player whose name is a sufficiently recognizable guarantee of lowbrow swashbuckle to make the picture a box-office success.

Nevertheless we are ready to test IVANHOE with any cast designated by RKO. Perhaps the name of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. might, by a process of association with his father, convince the public that they would enjoy the picture. But that is pure speculation—it would take a nationwide survey to decide the point.

Princeton, March 25, 1941.

SILAS MARNER

"Adapted from George Eliot's romantic story of a young weaver who turns into a bitter miser when his sweetheart betrays him. Then even his gold is stolen. Half crazed, he believes that a little golden-haired girl represents his lost treasure, and then finds that through her he has again won friendship and love."

LORNA DOONE

"The immortal love story of a young English farmer and his enchantingly beautiful sweetheart, who is held captive in the mountain hideout of a band of daring outlaws. He braves frozen death to rescue her from her captors during a blizzard, then leads a band of enraged farmers against the outlaws and drives them from the country."

IVANHOE

"Adapted from Sir Walter Scott's adventurous story of Merrie England in the days of Robin Hood—about a brave knight who battles to rescue his lady love from a castle where she is held prisoner, saves a beautiful Jewess from being burned at the stake, and helps Richard the Lion Hearted regain his throne."

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXII

RKO STOCK & CONTRACT PLAYERS

We have just completed an experimental study designed to measure the reaction of theatre audiences to fourteen of your stock and contract players.

The procedure was to expose their photographs, without names, to a representative cross-section of theatregoers and to ask this question: "Here are photographs of eight men who may be future movie stars. Which one of them would you yourself want to see in the movies?"

We must emphasize that the results of this study do not in any way constitute a definitive prediction as to the future success of these fourteen players. Obviously there are too many other factors involved.

Their acting ability, their dancing, their voices do not show in their faces; their foreign accents do not show in their faces; the power of their talent agencies does not show in their faces; the breaks they will receive does not show in their faces.

But in so far as you can judge a personality from his or her face, just so far is this study a significant index of future popularity.

"Most Want to See in the Movies"

	%
Desi Arnaz	23
Alberto Vila	18
Edmund O'Brien	12
Jack Briggs	12
Buddy Ebsen	11
Charles Quigley	10
Kent Taylor	9
Lee Bonnell	5

On the basis of these results, Desi Arnaz and Alberto Vila look the most promising, but our respondents had no means of knowing that these two actors are Latins with Latin accents. If we are not very much mistaken, their votes should be considerably discounted on this account. All we have discovered about marquee values would indicate that a foreign accent is a grievous handicap to any actor—it obstructs the normal processes of self-identification. That does not mean, of course, that an actor with a foreign accent *cannot* become a big marquee name; Charles Boyer overcame the handicap.

Unfortunately a substantial number of persons recognized the pictures of Desi Arnaz, and a few also recognized Kent Taylor and Buddy Ebsen. It is probable that the vote of these three players was thus somewhat inflated. None of the other actors were recognized, and none of the actresses.

Of the six American actors Edmund O'Brien and Jack Briggs emerge in first place, but only three percentage points separate O'Brien, Briggs, Ebsen, Quigley and Taylor. Lee Bonnell is the only one who, on the basis of his appearance, is significantly behind the rest of the field.

We wanted to make sure that our vote was not being unduly influenced by the factor of *beauty*. In a field led by Mickey Rooney and Spencer Tracy, it is obvious that good-looks are not the cardinal factor.

We therefore conducted a second survey, asking respondents which one of the eight actors they considered "most handsome". Results were as follows:

"Most Handsome"

	%
Desi Arnaz	22
Alberto Vila	20
Lee Bonnell	17
Jack Briggs	13
Charles Quigley	12
Kent Taylor	8
Edmund O'Brien	7
Buddy Ebsen	1

It is significant that Lee Bonnell, who emerged *last* in the first survey, should be voted the most handsome of the six American actors. In other words, the public thinks Bonnell is good looking but does not like him so much. With Edmund O'Brien and Buddy Ebsen the reverse is true.

Here are the sex-age breakdowns on "most want to see". They provide a future demonstration of the fact that theatregoers tend to prefer the personalities who come closest to their own age:

Most Want to See

	Ages 12-17 %	18-30 %	31-up %	Male %	Female %	Total %
Desi Arnaz	42	20	11	25	20	23
Alberto Vila	8	16	28	17	18	18
Edmund O'Brien	4	14	13	15	9	12
Jack Briggs	10	14	13	7	18	12
Buddy Ebsen	6	14	9	15	7	11
Charles Quigley	10	9	14	10	11	10
Kent Taylor	10	9	8	7	10	9
Lee Bonnell	10	4	4	4	7	5

Now we come to the six actresses:

Most Want to See

	<i>Ages 12-17</i>	<i>18-30</i>	<i>31-up</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Dorothy Comingore	39	30	31	32	33	32
Ruth Warrick	21	27	25	20	31	25
Susan Fox	22	15	8	17	13	15
Signe Hasso	9	12	11	15	6	11
Vera Haal	7	11	10	11	8	10
Michele Morgan	2	5	15	5	9	7

In the case of the actresses the two leaders, Comingore and Warrick, do not suffer from the unseen handicap of a foreign accent. There seems to be no room for doubt that, on the basis of appearance, these two ladies are way out ahead.

It is significant that the three actresses who emerge at the bottom of the list are all three foreigners. Michele Morgan shows the most ominous signs of weakness, with her acceptance greatest among theatregoers over thirty years of age, and almost nil among the younger theatregoers.

On the basis of this experimental study we would nominate Dorothy Comingore, Ruth Warrick, Edmund O'Brien and Jack Briggs as most likely to become big ticket-sellers.

Princeton, March 26, 1941.

TYPICAL COMMENTS

MICHELE MORGAN

"Like Garbo," "Like Dietrich," "sophisticated," "glamorous."

SUSAN FOX

"Exotic," "dreamy," "dopey," "sick," "love-sick," "sleepy looking," "bored," "glamorous."

DOROTHY COMINGORE

"Natural," "sweet," "cute," "simple," "unsophisticated," "typical American," "not glamorous."

RUTH WARRICK

"Real American girl," "Looks like an American type, I'm tired of foreigners."

SIGNE HASSO

Comments too varied to summarize.

VERA HAAL

Comments too varied to summarize.

KENT TAYLOR

"Like Melvyn Douglas," "comedy."

EDMUND O'BRIEN

"Not a sissy," "not pretty," "not a gigolo," "a MAN," "Clean cut," "masculine," "a good fellow."

LEE BONNELL

"Good looking," "a heart throb," "ornamental."

CHARLES QUIGLEY

"Serious," "Latin," "sensitive."

DESI ARNAZ

"Collegiate," "Young," "kid," "Latin type," "good looking."

BUDDY EBSSEN

"Funny," "comical."

ALBERTO VILA

"Intelligent," "brains," "sensible,"

JACK BRIGGS

"Nice."

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXIII

"We'd Enjoy These Historical Movies If Only They Were Funny"

On March 6, 1941 we received instructions to measure the audience acceptance value of a picture about Mark Twain, with Walter Brennan in the name part. Twelve days later we telegraphed the following report:

"Our findings indicate high audience acceptance value for MARK TWAIN with Walter Brennan. Recommend you to proceed. Must emphasize however that box-office success depends on the public being made to realize that your picture is not in any way stodgy highbrow biography. Interest is concentrated in Mark Twain's humor, his 'HUCK FINNISH' boyhood, his romance and his rip-roaring Western adventures. The title might well be THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN and it might well be directed by Harold Lloyd and Edward Killy, if you see what I mean."

The great question mark in our minds when we received this assignment was whether the subject would be too "educational". We find that Mark Twain is indeed spoiled for many people by having been a part of their school curriculum, but not to anything like the extent we had feared.

Theatregoers were shown synopses of MARK TWAIN and GENERAL LEE OF VIRGINIA and asked the test question "Which of these two movies would be most educational?" Seventy percent named GENERAL LEE as most educational, only thirty percent naming MARK TWAIN.

While some of the favorable comments on MARK TWAIN are of such a nature that they must be discounted under the heading "prestige", the *general* tenor of favorable comment is entirely genuine and naïve. Here is a small selection of these comments selected at random.

HUMOR

If I felt in need of a laugh.
Anyone can use a good laugh once in a while.
I imagine it would be on the comical side.
This would be funniest.
I think there would be lots of comedy in that.
It sounds funny—comical.
Because I like his style of humor.
It should be very, very funny. I wanted to buy the book and couldn't get it.
—> We'd enjoy these biographical movies if only they were funny.

ENTERTAINMENT

All-around picture. Fellow would have a little entertainment.
This isn't so educational.
This sounds peppy.
Sounds like fun along with fact.
I think it's more like human beings act. It's human.
Would get me out of the "dumps"—cheer me up.
I think it's a lot of fun.
Because it isn't too serious.
Some tragedy and plenty of laughs—should be good.
Sounds fair as biographies go. Not so dull as most.
If they did his life, it would be just sort of comic—not very serious.

INTEREST IN HIS PERSONALITY

He was certainly a character.
Read his life a half dozen times.
He must have been a pretty swell guy.
He was quite a rugged, bluff character—obscene in some of his books.
A good old sport all the way around.
I've read books on him—He's a very amusing figure.
He's been such a down-to-the-earth character. I'm certain I'd like this very much.
He certainly lived an eventful life.
I'd see this because I've always admired M. Twain as a lovable character.
I like the things I've heard about him as a personality.
Can't think of a man I'd rather have been.

ADVENTURE

I would think that had lots of outdoor adventures.
Sounds pretty full of adventure.
It's rather an adventure story—anything can happen in them. I like them.
Sounds exciting with lots of adventure.
It's a good adventure picture. I like those pictures about adventure like that.
Sounds like the type of adventure story I like.

STARTS YOUNG AND GROWS OLD

It's got some life to it—about a boy growing up.
Like to see pictures where he starts off young and grows up.
I want to see that on account of the story from childhood to old age.

NOSTALGIA FOR OLD TIMES

Yes, if that horse and buggy upsetting is an example.
His was the ideal existence.
I'd like it pretty good because it deals with the early life of boys.
Just because of memories.
Brings back my boyhood.

FAMILY APPEAL

Oh, surely, he's a favorite of mine. That's the type of picture I encourage my children to see.
I'd want my daughter to see this—a good family picture.
Fun for the youngsters.
This would be the one for the children.
I like his books—most boys do. (*a boy aged 14*).

INTEREST IN HIS BOOKS

I've read his books and I'm one of his enthusiasts.
It's like HUCKLEBERRY FINN.
I enjoyed TOM SAWYER so much I'd like to see story of Sam. Clemens.
I've read his books and I'd like to see his life. It sounds good and interesting.
Interested in Mark Twain—favorite author.
I'd be sure to see Mark Twain. I've always loved his stories.
His books have made good pictures; his life should be equally good.
Would like to see how many of his ideas for his books came from his life.
He's one of my favorite authors. I've read all his books.

A PART OF THE AMERICAN SCENE

I'm interested in that part of the country. I live near that. I've seen those places.
They could make a nice slice of the American scene out of that.
I like stories of river life.
Brings to life a certain personality native to America—*rockbottom America*.
Such a thoroughly *American* character.

WALTER BRENNAN

I think that would be good with a good actor like say L. Barrymore.
If Will Rogers were alive, I'd see it, but there's no one who can make it.
Hope they keep O. Welles out of it.
Brennan could do Mark Twain to a finish.
I like that set-up but I never heard of that W. Brennan.
I think W. Brennan is marvelous and he seems to fit the part so well.
W. Brennan was good in so many pictures I think he ought to be starred in this one.
I think Brennan is a fine actor. Glad *he's starred at last*.
Brennan is the most outstanding character actor in the movies.
I never heard of W. Brennan.
W. Brennan is one of the best actors I ever saw.

You could make two completely different kinds of pictures about MARK TWAIN. The first would be an historical masterpiece in the manner of Mr. Dieterle or Mr. Cromwell. It would be received with rave reviews. The second would be humorous, adventurous and romantic, without any highbrow pretensions. It might be panned by the more solemn critics but our survey indicates that it would be welcomed by theatregoers.

A large part of its box-office success would depend on the extent to which you were successful in publicizing the fact that the picture was not a stodgy biography. That presents a high challenge to your advertising and publicity department.

In measuring the audience acceptance value of A pictures, it has been our experience that on the average approximately 45 per cent of all affirmative comments are expressed in terms of the star or stars, the remaining 55 per cent being in terms of the story. There is of course considerable variation from this average, and the extent of the variation provides a rough and ready index of the relative strength of star and story.

In the case of MARK TWAIN only 14 per cent of the affirmative comments are in terms of Walter Brennan. This represents one of the lowest star votes we have ever measured; which means, in effect, that Walter Brennan's name is not going to sell many tickets. It also means that the story has an exceptionally strong appeal, when it can attract such a healthy vote without the aid of a big marquee name.*

When shown a batch of three photographs of Brennan (in THE WESTERNER, in NICE GIRL, and as himself) only 23 per cent were able to identify him by name. A further 8 per cent recalled having seen him in one or more pictures but were unable to remember his name. Here are the comparable identification figures on photographs of other actors:

	<i>% identifying by name</i>
Clark Gable	97
George Sanders	32
Walter Brennan	23
Dennis Morgan	18

These figures go to show that a personality can be one of the best known figures in the motion picture industry without being known to more than a fraction of the theatregoing public.

We have reason to believe that it would broaden the audience acceptance value of MARK TWAIN if you could start the picture in Twain's boyhood with a boy like Jimmy Lydon. There seems to be widespread interest in pictures where the hero starts young and grows old.† The metamorphosis induces a pleasant nostalgia in the most unsentimental people. What is more, the wider the age-span portrayed, the more age-groups will be able to project themselves into the picture—which all goes to broaden the audience appeal.

In recent years historical biographies have been consistently blackballed by the theatregoing public, and it is only natural for you to feel leery of any more pictures in this classification. But it is just when the rest of Hollywood has accepted a blanket taboo of this kind that some shrewd producer will ignore the taboo and clean up in doing so.

Let us consider recent biographies and ask ourselves whether their failure necessarily implies that all biographical pictures are doomed to failure. About 70 per cent of them have been about foreigners—Reuter, Zola, Pasteur, Juarez, Parnell, Rembrandt, Elizabeth and Essex, Cavell, Victoria, Mary Stuart, Marco Polo, Stanley and Livingstone—and we know that American audiences are seldom interested in foreign subjects.

*Brennan's contribution would be indirect. Being a great actor he will help to make a fine picture, but his name on the marquee is not going to have much *direct* influence on theatregoers.

†This device is reduced to a glorious absurdity by M. Guitry in LA VIE D'UN TRICHEUR and elsewhere.

Of the American biographies a vast majority have been handled in a thoroughly stodgy, self-conscious way, without action, without humor, devoid of all entertainment values. But there have been exceptions—notably Lillian Russell and Knute Rockne.

There is certainly no evidence here to prove that a biographical picture about an American cannot be a box-office success. Far from it. We'd enjoy these historical movies if only they were funny!"

We are now engaged upon testing three different titles—MARK TWAIN, THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN and THE ADVENTURES OF SAMUEL CLEMENS.

Princeton, April 5, 1941.

"MARK TWAIN"

Walter Brennan

"The rollicking life story, from boyhood to old age, of Mark Twain—a man who didn't give a darn about anybody or anything. His uproarious adventures as a river boat pilot, silver miner, journalist and bankrupt—and how he wins his wife by deliberately upsetting his horse and buggy so he can prolong his visit at her home."

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXIV

THE LAST MILE and THIEVES LIKE US

On February 26th, 1941, we received your instructions to poll two gangster stories—THIEVES LIKE US, a novel by Edward Anderson and THE LAST MILE, a play by John Wexley. In both cases we were instructed to use Humphrey Bogart. On the same day VARIETY reported that the success of HIGH SIERRA and TALL DARK AND HANDSOME had inspired other studios to search for more stories of that type.

Three weeks later we telegraphed the following preliminary reports on these properties:

"THE LAST MILE with Humphrey Bogart is strong with men but almost entirely without appeal for women. Box-office expectancy looks about the same as HIGH SIERRA. Remember Bogart is not among the fifty biggest ticket sellers."

"THIEVES LIKE US with Bogart emerges very low with females and only moderately high with men. Over all somewhat lower than THE LAST MILE. Many theatre-goers recognize the resemblance to HIGH SIERRA. Is this healthy? Title THIEVES LIKE US outpulls THIS GUN FOR HIRE by slight margin."

More intensive testing has subsequently demonstrated beyond any doubt that, of the two stories, THE LAST MILE stands the better chance of box-office success.

In recording our finding that it starts with a box-office expectancy approximately equivalent to that of HIGH SIERRA, we must point out that the success of the Warner Brothers production was only comparative in relation to its low budget. HIGH SIERRA rates 102 per cent on the RKO Classification.

The elements which made the play so successful on Broadway in 1929 appeal to many movie-goers today. But there have been too many gangster-prison pictures in recent years for THE LAST MILE to have quite the electrifying effect that it produced on the comparatively unspoiled patrons of the legitimate theatre twelve years ago.

THE LAST MILE appeals most to boys under eighteen. With persons over thirty, of both sexes, it is markedly weak. In the middle group—eighteen to thirty—it is moderate. It is very weak with persons in the higher income levels, moderate with the rest.

THIEVES LIKE US appeals most to males in the age group 18-30, but the presence of the "moll" element spoils it for boys. Like the LAST MILE it is very weak indeed with persons over thirty, and with females of all ages. Also like THE LAST MILE it lacks appeal for the higher income ranges.

So far as we have been able to detect, there is no special recrudescence of public interest in gangster subjects. HIGH SIERRA came after a long interval without any pictures of this type, and it reaped the rewards which so often await the picture which comes "out of cycle". THIEVES LIKE US is a very similar property (as many persons in our survey recognized), but it does not enjoy the same distinction of being first on the scene, and it is not quite such a dramatic story.

On the basis of our survey we would advise RKO not to make THIEVES LIKE US.

As for THE LAST MILE, the story has an adequate acceptance value with certain segments of the population and we would advise RKO to go ahead.

Princeton, April 5, 1941.

THE LAST MILE

"Powerful drama about a ruthless gangster who makes a desperate attempt to escape from the death house to avenge the electrocution of an innocent man. For six terrifying hours, he holds prison officials and state troopers at bay—then when his bullets are gone, walks into their machine gun fire, cheating the electric chair."

THIEVES LIKE US

"A thrill-packed gangster picture that has a different background—photographed in the snow-capped mountains and painted desert of the Great Southwest. Three bank robbers and their girls confound the police with daring hold-ups and breath-taking escapes. What happens when one gets jealous and betrays the gang."

NOTE:

In a separate study we measured the comparative pulling power of two titles: THIEVES LIKE US and THIS GUN FOR HIRE. The former won by a small margin, but the word "like" was widely misconstrued as a verb—thieves *like* us, thieves are fond of us. On balance there does not seem to be much to choose between the two titles.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXV

8 GOOD, 2 FAIR AND 2 BAD

On October 15, 1940 we reported that Mr. & Mrs. SMITH would start with a box-office expectancy "somewhere between 105 and 115 per cent on the RKO Classification". Today we find that the RKO Classification actually shows Mr. & Mrs. SMITH at 116 per cent.

In the course of our study of various vehicles for Paul Muni last October, we found that HUDSON's BAY would start with a box-office expectancy of 110 per cent on the RKO Classification. Today HUDSON's BAY stands at 110 per cent on the RKO Classification.

Here is the record of our predictions during the last twelve months:

	<i>A. R. I. Prediction %</i>	<i>Result on RKO Classification %</i>
<i>Good</i>		
BOOM TOWN	180+	190
MY FAVORITE WIFE	140	136
MR. & MRS. SMITH	105-115	116
HUDSON's BAY	110	110
LUCKY PARTNERS	92	93
THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED	90-	82
VIGIL IN THE NIGHT	90-	95 (with Louis-Godoy fight)
BILL OF DIVORCEMENT	67	57
<i>Fair</i>		
ESCAPE	120	105
IRENE	105	95
<i>Bad</i>		
KITTY FOYLE	100	151 (New Year's week— equivalent to 137 in normal weeks)
TOM BROWN's SCHOOL DAYS	85	43

When we first went to work for RKO in March 1940, we believed that we could predict whether a picture would be a smash hit, run-of-mill, or a failure. We were careful not to claim any greater precision.

The variables which operate between our polls and the release of the picture appeared to preclude the possibility of making more definite predictions. However, as the months passed we began to find that predictions based on the two main factors only—synopsis and cast—could be made with an astonishing degree of accuracy. Variations in the other factors—dialogue, acting, direction and publicity—appeared in most cases to cancel out.

Nevertheless it was obvious that sooner or later these variables would combine to trip us up—they *would all be acutely super-normal or acutely sub-normal in one picture*. That is exactly what happened in the case of KITTY FOYLE:

- (1) Ginger Rogers turned in a performance which was so far above her average that it won her the Academy Award.
- (2) At every stage your advertising and publicity people obtained the highest penetrations we have ever recorded for them.
- (3) In Report XXXII we recommended that RKO should secure newspaper syndication of the novel. This was done, with the result that between our October prediction and the release of the picture, the number of persons who had read the book actually increased more than 50 per cent.
- (4) Director Sam Wood surpassed himself.

It is inevitable that sooner or later we shall encounter another picture where the "late variables" are so exceptional that they invalidate the prediction made on the basis of story and cast alone.

But our experience has demonstrated that such pictures are surprisingly rare exceptions. In about eight cases out of ten the story and the cast are the dominant factors to such an extent that it is safe to predict box-office on the basis of those two factors alone.

For the first time in history a motion picture company is able to evaluate stories before they are purchased, and to evaluate casts before the pictures are photographed.

If you can know within ten points what eight out of ten pictures will gross before you make them, you have gone a long way towards eliminating the guesswork from production.

The record shows that we still have a long way to go before we can guarantee to deliver a home run every time we go to bat. But now, after one year in the service of RKO, we are more than ever convinced that our batting *average* is bound to be higher than that of any executive or group of executives who operate without the guidance of the poll.

Princeton, April 17, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXVI

SISTER CARRIE

When exposed to a representative cross-section of all theatregoers, *SISTER CARRIE* with Irene Dunne emerged very low.

We attribute *part* of this failure to the exceptional difficulty of building an adequate synopsis of Dreiser's story. Part, but not all.

<i>Three Personalities</i>	<i>How the Public Wants Them</i>	<i>How They Are Being Used Today</i>
Ronald Colman	Adventure	Modern Comedy
Cary Grant	Modern Comedy	Hitchcock Thriller
Irene Dunne	Modern Comedy	Emotional Drama

Our surveys indicate that by herself, as a straight actress, Irene Dunne is not capable of selling many tickets, except to females in her own rather restricted age group. But as Cary Grant's partner and as a harbinger of modern romantic comedy, Irene Dunne's presence in the cast can sell a lot of tickets.

In comedies like *THE AWFUL TRUTH* and *MY FAVORITE WIFE*, the factor of self-identification is not all-important. But in deep emotional drama like *SISTER CARRIE*, it is absolutely imperative that large segments of the audience should be able to identify themselves with the heroine.

In *KITTY FOYLE* that self-identification was easy, because Ginger Rogers is the same age and the same general type as millions of working girls. But Irene Dunne* is older than 76 per cent of all female theatre-goers, *and they know it*. Result: to watch Miss Dunne in a drama of emotional development is approximately equivalent to watching the emotional development of one's aunt. The aunt can be very funny and amusing in a comedy situation, but it is embarrassing to observe her in a serious clinch.

Our finding is that Irene Dunne in *SISTER CARRIE* would pack them in between the ages of thirty-five and fifty—females only. We would not care to make a more definitive prediction without securing the producer's indorsement of our synopsis as fair and representative.

Princeton, April 17, 1941.

SISTER CARRIE

"Based on Theodore Dreiser's dramatic real life story of a working girl who step by step fights her way to fame as a stage star—and greatness *as a woman*. Though her marriage to a weak man brings heartbreak to them both, she rises above suffering to find new peace."

*Born July 14, 1904.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXVII

OLD FILMS FOR NEW

In a nationwide survey just completed Audience Research Institute exposed the titles of one hundred motion pictures released prior to 1936 and asked theatregoers, "Are there any on this list that you yourself would especially enjoy seeing as a new movie?"

It is remarkable that four out of the first ten are all war pictures—a fact which deserves consideration in relation to our findings on ARMY SURGEON.

The appearance of LITTLE WOMEN so high on the list is significant. The current Audit of Marquee Values shows Miss Hepburn in sixteenth place.

It must be emphasized that voting was limited to the one hundred pictures included on our roster. We also found considerable interest in a picture not present on the roster—SMILING THROUGH, another war romance. Other pictures churned up by supplementary questioning were CAPTAIN BLOOD and MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION.

We hope that in the results of this survey you will find ideas not only for re-issues but also for new pictures.

Rank

1. ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT
2. IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT
3. COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO
4. HELL'S ANGELS
5. BIRTH OF A NATION
6. FAREWELL TO ARMS
7. LITTLE WOMEN
COVERED WAGON
9. WHAT PRICE GLORY
10. GRAND HOTEL
11. FORTY SECOND STREET
BEN HUR
13. DADDY LONG LEGS
14. THE SHEIK
15. THE BIG PARADE
I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG
PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY THE EIGHTH
18. BARRETT'S OF WIMPOLE STREET
CAVALCADE
20. DINNER AT EIGHT
TEN COMMANDMENTS
22. THE BIG HOUSE
THE CHAMP
CIMARRON
DESERT SONG

ALSO RAN

ABIE'S IRISH ROSE
ANNA CHRISTIE
ARROWSMITH
BAD GIRL
BEAU BRUMMEL
BERKELEY SQUARE
BLACK PIRATE
CHANG
COCKEYED WORLD
COMMON CLAY
CROWD, THE
DISRAELI
DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS
EMMA
FLESH AND THE DEVIL
FIVE STAR FINAL
FOOTLIGHT PARADE
FREE SOUL
FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE
GUARDSMAN
GOLD DIGGERS OF BROADWAY
GREEN GODDESS, THE
HALLELUJAH
HOUSE OF ROTHSCHILD
I'M NO ANGEL
IN OLD ARIZONA
JOURNEY'S END
KING OF KINGS
KISS ME AGAIN
LA BOHEME
LADY FOR A DAY
LAST COMMAND
LAST LAUGH
LOST WORLD
MADAME X
MARRIAGE CIRCLE
MERRY-GO-ROUND

MERRY WIDOW
MIN AND BILL
MONSIEUR BEAUCAIRE
NANOOK OF THE NORTH
OLD ENGLISH
OLIVER TWIST
ONE NIGHT OF LOVE
PATRIOT
PETER PAN
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY
QUO VADIS
RASPUTIN AND THE EMPRESS
RESURRECTION
RIO RITA
ROSITA
SCARAMOUCHE
SCARFACE
SEA BEAST
SECRETS
SHE DONE HIM WRONG
SKIPPY
SORRELL AND SON
STATE FAIR
STREET ANGEL
STREET SCENE
SUNNY SIDE UP
SUNRISE
TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES
TOL'ABLE DAVID
TROUBLE IN PARADISE
UNDERWORLD
UNHOLY THREE
VIVA VILLA
VOLGA BOATMAN
WAY DOWN EAST
WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER

Princeton, April 18, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXVIII

UNTITLED ORIGINAL
BY FAY AND MICHAEL KANIN

On March 12, 1941 we received instruction to study audience reactions to an untitled original by Fay and Michael Kanin, with Adolphe Menjou, James Craig and Lucille Ball. The story was synopsisized as follows:

"Action-packed drama about a prize-fight manager who thinks women are poison—especially when his promising young heavyweight falls in love with a night-club singer. What happens when the manager breaks up their romance and the girl discovers that the only way to win back her prize-fighter is to make him lose the title bout."

On April 4, we telegraphed the following preliminary report:

"Boxing story by Michael Kanin with Menjou, Ball and Craig shows least weakness among the poorest elements in big cities. Otherwise it is very low indeed. We find that theatre-goers are less interested in prize-fighters than in ball players. Menjou, Ball and Craig are still almost entirely without power to sell tickets. Even for a "B" picture the indications are unfavorable. Urge you to consider Sue Barton as vehicle for Ball and Craig."

When exposed to a representative cross-section of all theatre-goers, this picture—with the cast as specified—received so few votes that we are unable to estimate its box-office expectancy.

The theatre-going public does not seem to be very much interested in prize-fighting as the subject of a motion picture. Boxing possesses a certain interest for males, particularly boys under eighteen, but it is anathema to a large majority of females in all age groups—more so even than baseball.

The combined marquee value of Menjou, Ball and Craig is only a little more than zero—their aggregate power to sell tickets is infinitesimal.*

*See Fifth Audit of Marquee Values.

The addition of Wayne Morris might sell a few more tickets, but even *his* marquee value is small.

On your suggestion, we conceived and tested the pulling power of three titles for this picture: "WOMEN ARE POISON", "RINGSIDE" and "MADISON SQUARE GARDEN".

WOMEN ARE POISON was victorious by a small but distinct margin over the other two titles, which emerged approximately equal. Needless to say, men tended to vote for MADISON SQUARE GARDEN and RINGSIDE, while women tended to vote for WOMEN ARE POISON. In the circumstance there does not seem to be much to choose between the three titles.

We are now engaged upon testing Lucille Ball and James Craig in SUE BARTON, the story which was the subject of Report XXI.

Princeton, April 17, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXIX

WHEN SHOULD PUBLICITY START?

One day last August Mr. Jock Lawrence was lamenting the fact that his carefully timed publicity campaign for *THE WESTERNER* had been wasted at the last minute by Mr. Goldwyn suddenly postponing the picture's release for several weeks. Lawrence thought that the publicity would go cold, that the public would forget all he had told them about the picture, and that he would have to begin all over again.

At that time Mr. Lawrence's lamentation looked like a good argument for starting publicity only a week or two before release, always assuming that the public memory was in fact as short as he supposed.

But a study recently completed by Audience Research Institute shows that the public does not easily 'forget' picture publicity.

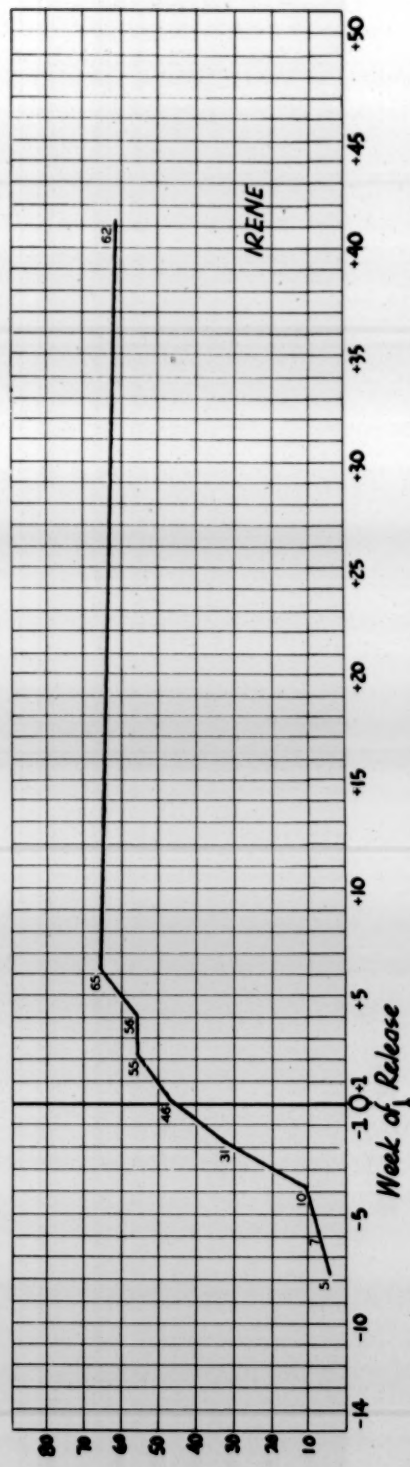
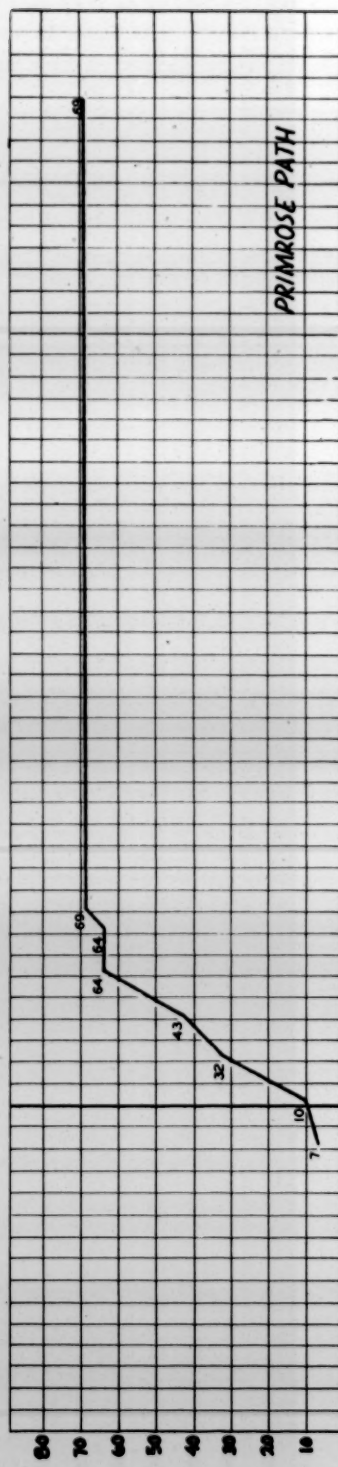
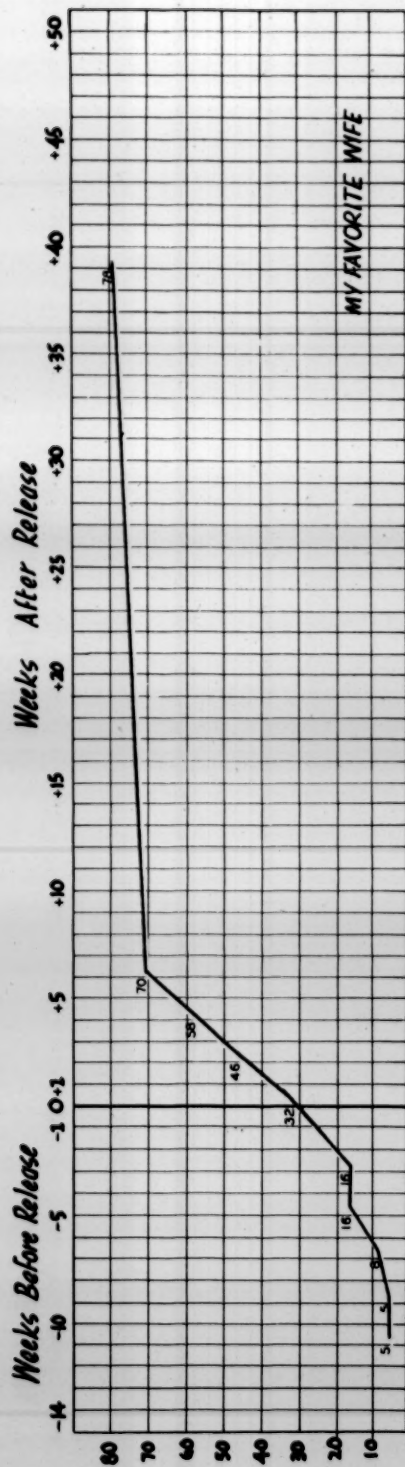
We have measured the publicity penetration of certain RKO pictures *forty weeks after their release*, and we find that they are then at least as high as they were only six weeks after release.

It is interesting to see that the publicity penetration of *MY FAVORITE WIFE* and *PRIMROSE PATH* did not amount to much until these pictures had already played their most lucrative situations. The resultant cash loss to the company cannot easily be estimated, but it was undoubtedly substantial.

Consideration of these charts, and of the other charts sent you on January 31, 1941, prompts the conclusion that few publicity campaigns get under way *soon enough*.

To achieve its maximum gross a picture must cross the release line with the highest possible penetration. To do that means starting the campaign many weeks earlier than is now the custom.

Princeton May 3, 1941.



AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXX

THE 9 O'CLOCK PLAN

On March 9, 1941, we received instructions to poll the theatergoing public in New York City on their attitude towards the 9 O'Clock Plan.

Before we could begin our survey we found it necessary to acquire a rudimentary knowledge of some of the problems involved in the operation of the Plan. In the course of this preliminary study, two "pilot" surveys were undertaken:

1. Fifty-six theater managers were interviewed—twenty-two RKO managers, fourteen Loew's managers and twenty "other" managers. Our report on what these various managers think about the 9 O'Clock Plan was rendered on April 16. Seventy-three per cent of those interviewed were found to be opposed to the Plan.
2. Before our final questionnaire was decided a trial questionnaire was tested in New York. This trial questionnaire revealed these among other facts:
 - a. Not everyone who attends motion picture theaters understands what is meant by "main feature". In some houses where the main feature is shown last, many of the patrons speak of it as the "second feature" simply because it goes on after the B feature.
 - b. Some people who actually attend theaters on the 9 O'Clock Plan do not realize that the Plan exists, while a few who attend theaters that are not on the Plan are under the erroneous impression that the main feature is shown in these houses at 9 P. M.

WHERE THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

Interviewing for the main survey was conducted in Central Park West, Harlem, the Washington Square district*, Flushing, Bayridge, Bushwick and Williamsbridge. The interviews were conducted on the street, in homes, in offices, in public buildings, in stores and in parks.

WHO WAS INTERVIEWED

The cross-section used in this survey contained a sample of males and females of all ages and of all income levels, each in proportion to its number among the entire theatergoing public in the City of New York. In addition, a sufficient number of Negroes, Jews and Italians were questioned to enable us to present separate figures for these groups.

*Included because it has 7 neighborhood theaters *not* on the Plan.

The accuracy of any sampling poll depends on the extent to which the persons interviewed represent a perfect cross-section of the total voting public. In this case the persons interviewed were selected to represent an accurate cross-section of the total theatergoing public.

CONCLUSIONS

It was not the purpose of this poll to provide a final answer to the general question whether the 9 O'Clock Plan is a good thing or a bad thing, but rather to provide such detailed information for various segments of the population of New York City as would help you in arriving at your own conclusion.

We find that 46 per cent like the Plan, while 43 per cent prefer the old schedule and 11 per cent express no preference.

As was to be expected, we find that the Plan is most popular with the minority who finish their evening meal after 8:00 P. M. and with those who prefer single features.

Princeton, May, 1941.

HOW MANY HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE 9 O'CLOCK PLAN?

The first problem assigned to us was to find out what proportion of all New York theatergoers know about the 9 O'Clock Plan. Each person in the entire cross-section was therefore asked for a "Yes" or "No" answer to this question:

"The last showing of the main feature in some theaters starts on week-day evenings at 9 or 9:30 instead of the more usual 10:30. Have you heard about this Plan?"

Three out of every five persons (60 per cent) answered YES. Two out of five (40 per cent) had not heard about the Plan.

This result will be startling to those managers who had previously volunteered the opinion that by now everyone in New York must know about the Plan.

	<i>Have Heard</i> %	<i>Have Not Heard</i> %
<u>ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED</u>	60	40
<u>MALES</u>	61	39
<u>FEMALES</u>	59	41
<u>AGE GROUPS</u>		
12 to 17 years old	59	41
18 to 30 years old	66	34
31 to 44 years old	61	39
45 and over	49	51
<u>INCOME GROUPS</u>		
Prosperous (Over \$50 per week)	66	34
Middle (\$30 to \$50 " ")	69	31
Lower Middle (\$20 to \$30 " ")	57	43
Poor (Under \$20 " ")	51	49
<u>RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS</u>		
Italian	40	60
Jewish	71	29
Negro	55	45
All others	60	40
<u>FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE</u>		
Once a week and up	66	34
2 to 3 times a month	51	49
Once a month	43	57
<u>THOSE WHO FREQUENT THEATERS ON THE PLAN</u>	62	38
<u>THOSE WHO FREQUENT THEATERS NOT ON THE PLAN</u>	54	46

DO THEATERGOERS PREFER THE 9 O'CLOCK PLAN?

The next part of our assignment was to find out what proportion of the motion picture public likes the Plan better than the old schedule.

The procedure employed was to hand the respondent a card on which were printed two schedules — the old schedule and the 9 O'Clock Plan, and to ask this question: "Here are two schedules of movie programs at double-feature theaters. One schedule shows the main feature coming on at 6 o'clock and at 9 o'clock; the other shows the main feature coming on at 7:30 and at 10:30. Which of those two schedules is more convenient to you personally?"

"B" or Second Feature 6:00 P. M.
MAIN "A" FEATURE 7:30 P. M.

"B" or Second Feature 9:00 P. M.
MAIN "A" FEATURE 10:30 P. M.

MAIN "A" FEATURE 6:00 P. M.
"B" or Second Feature 7:30 P. M.

MAIN "A" FEATURE 9:00 P. M.
"B" or Second Feature 10:30 P. M.

Forty-six per cent voted for the 9 O'Clock Plan while 43 per cent preferred the old schedule and 11 per cent expressed no preference. This result shows a small majority in favor of the Plan, but our experience is that most of the "no preference" vote really favors the *status quo*—in this case the old schedule.

	Prefer Old Schedule %	Prefer 9 O'Clock Plan %	No Preference %
<u>ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED</u>	43	46	11
<u>MALES</u>	46	42	12
<u>FEMALES</u>	39	50	11
<u>AGE GROUPS</u>			
12 to 17 years old	41	42	17
18 to 30 years old	46	48	6
31 and over	39	47	14
<u>INCOME GROUPS</u>			
Prosperous (Over \$50 per week)	57	40	3
Middle (\$30 to \$50 " ")	44	50	6
Lower Middle (\$20 to \$30 " ")	41	45	14
Poor (Under \$20 " ")	35	46	19
<u>USUAL PRICE PAID (Inc'd Tax)</u>			
Those paying under 25¢	36	39	25
Those paying 25 to 35¢	43	50	7
Those paying 36 to 40¢	51	41	8
Those paying over 40¢	45	50	5

<u>RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS</u>	<i>Prefer Old Schedule %</i>	<i>Prefer 9 O'Clock Plan %</i>	<i>No Preference %</i>
Italian	46	40	14
Jewish	39	54	7
Negro	38	45	17
All others	45	45	10

FINISH EVENING MEAL*

Before 7 o'clock (44 per cent of total)	43	41	16
7:00 to 8:00 (41 per cent of total)	43	49	8
8:00 and after (15 per cent of total)	40	54	6

TIME OF ARRIVAL AT THEATER*

7:00 to 7:59 (20 per cent of total)	61	37	2
8:00 to 8:59 (27 per cent of total)	39	58	3
9:00 onwards (14 per cent of total)	45	47	8

THOSE PREFERRING DOUBLE
FEATURES

45	42	13
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THOSE PREFERRING SINGLE
FEATURES

40	53	7
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*See page 6.

DOES THE PLAN FIT BED-TIMES?

One of the main objectives of the 9 O'Clock Plan is to get patrons into bed earlier. It is argued that theatergoing has always involved an undesirable upheaval in the daily routine of the average man, that every time he is kept up past his normal bed-time he feels fatigued the next morning, and that in general theatergoing should be made as much a part of his regular routine as is the purchase of a package of cigarettes.

This argument is often countered by the assertion that few if any theatergoers are kept up beyond their bed-time. What is the truth?

In our survey we asked New York theatergoers: "When you go to the movies do you plan to stay up later than usual?" No less than 43 per cent replied in the affirmative—a figure which is in line with our previous finding (July 1940) that 40 per cent of the population of the United States are kept up beyond their bed-time whenever they go to the theater.

DOES THE PLAN FIT DINNER-TIMES?

Another objective of the 9 O'Clock Plan is to make theatergoing more convenient for those who dine late. We find that only 15 per cent of all New York theatergoers finish their evening meal after 7:59.

<i>Finish Evening Meal</i>	<i>%</i>
Before 6 o'clock	9
6:00 to 6:29	14
6:30 to 6:59	21
7:00 to 7:29	25
7:30 to 7:59	16
8:00 to 8:29	7
8:29 onwards	8
	100

Here are the times at which New Yorkers arrive at the theater, as revealed by our survey:

<i>Arrive at Theater</i>	<i>%</i>
Before 6 o'clock	35
6:00 to 6:29	3
6:30 to 6:59	1
7:00 to 7:29	9
7:30 to 7:59	11
8:00 to 8:29	14
8:30 to 8:59	13
9:00 to 9:29	9
9:30 to 9:59	2
9:59 onwards	3
	100

DO THEATERGOERS PREFER 9 O'CLOCK OR 9:30?

All those who had voted for the Plan were asked whether they would prefer to have the main feature go on at 9 or 9:30. Seventy-six per cent voted for 9 o'clock, 13 per cent voted for 9:30, while 11 per cent expressed no preference.

	<i>Prefer 9 O'Clock %</i>	<i>Prefer 9:30 %</i>
<u>ALL PERSONS VOTING FOR THE PLAN</u>	76	13
<u>MALES</u>	75	15
<u>FEMALES</u>	77	12
<u>AGE GROUPS</u>		
12 to 17 years old	74	16
18 to 30 years old	75	16
31 to 44 years old	76	10
45 and over	80	8
<u>INCOME GROUPS</u>		
Prosperous (Over \$50 per week)	81	11
Middle (\$30 to \$50 " ")	77	10
Lower Middle (\$20 to \$30 " ")	73	16
Poor (Under \$20 " ")	74	15
<u>USUAL PRICE PAID (Inc'd Tax)</u>		
Those paying under 25¢	72	16
Those paying 25 to 35¢	74	13
Those paying 36 to 40¢	81	11
Those paying over 40¢	76	14
<u>FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE</u>		
Once a week and up	74	15
2 to 3 times a month	78	10
Once a month	83	12

NEW YORKERS PREFER DOUBLE FEATURES

To round out the information obtained by this study on the likes and dislikes of New York theatergoers, it was thought advisable to include a question on double *versus* single features.

We find that 63 per cent vote for double features and only 37 per cent for single features. Here are the breakdowns on this question for each segment in New York City:

	<i>Prefer Single Features</i> %	<i>Prefer Double Features</i> %
<u>ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED</u>	37	63
<u>MALES</u>	36	64
<u>FEMALES</u>	39	61
<u>AGE GROUPS</u>		
12 to 17 years old	16	84
18 to 30 years old	42	58
31 to 44 years old	45	55
45 and over	40	60
<u>INCOME GROUPS</u>		
Prosperous (Over \$50 per week)	55	45
Middle (\$30 to \$50 " ")	47	53
Lower Middle (\$20 to \$30 " ")	35	65
Poor (Under \$20 " ")	21	79
<u>USUAL PRICE PAID (Inc'd Tax)</u>		
Those paying under 25¢	18	82
Those paying 25 to 35¢	33	67
Those paying 36 to 40¢	35	65
Those paying over 40¢	52	48
<u>RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS</u>		
Italian	26	74
Jewish	49	51
Negro	16	84
All Others	35	65
<u>FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE</u>		
Once a week and up	33	67
2 to 3 times a month	49	51
Once a month	47	53